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SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE
6th meeting
held on
Wednesday, 28 October 1992
at 3 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 6th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KHOUINI (Tunisia)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 72: INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN THE PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE

(a) REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE (A/47/20)

(b) IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SECOND UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE EXPLORATION AND PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/47/383)

1. Mr. TISLER (Czechoslovakia) said that 1992 - International Space Year - had witnessed the commemoration of many important events in the field of outer space: the world was remembering the first flight of an artificial satellite and marking the anniversaries of the adoption of important instruments such as the 1967 Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies, and the Convention on International Liability for Damage Caused by Space Objects.

2. His delegation appreciated the contributions of the various delegations, particularly that of Canada, which had led to the adoption of the set of principles on the use of nuclear power sources (NPS) on board space objects. Outer space activities were raising problems of ecology and the protection of the living environment.

3. Since more detailed information on Czechoslovak space research was contained in Czechoslovakia's report on space activities, he would mention only a few notable achievements: the launching of the small satellite Magion 3, put into orbit within the international Apex project, various in-flight physiological experiments, and the development of several instruments by the Czechoslovak Academy of Science. He thanked the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) for organizing two seminars in Czechoslovakia and the European Community for starting the Land Cover project in Central and Eastern Europe.

4. Mr. TANG Chengyuan (China) recalled the various commemorative activities concerning International Space Year carried out world wide, and hoped that they would further facilitate international cooperation and technological development in the interests of all countries, the developing countries in particular. China had organized and supported a number of commemorative activities and had donated $30,000 to the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) to show its support. China also wished to be an active participant in the work and related activities of the Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.

5. He described a number of China's activities in the field of outer space in 1992, including the launch and recovery of satellites and the installation throughout the country of a high-precision network using the global satellite

(Mr. Tang Chengyuan, China)

fixing system. A number of such activities had been carried out in cooperation with other countries, particularly Australia and Sweden.

6. With respect to the adoption of the draft set of principles on the use of nuclear power sources in outer space, his delegation welcomed the consensus reached by the Committee and looked forward to the consideration and adoption of those principles at the current session of the General Assembly. However, his delegation wished to note that certain provisions still left room for improvement: for example, no explicit provisions were made as to the prohibition of the use of nuclear power sources for military purposes. Thus, work on future consideration and revision of the principles would be arduous. China would make its views known in detail at an appropriate time.

7. In conclusion, the peaceful exploration and use of outer space should be in the interests of all mankind; it was imperative to strengthen international cooperation between developed and developing countries, as well as between space and non-space countries, especially with respect to technology transfer. As a developing space country, China would do its share so as to create a brighter future for mankind.

8. Mr. YAMAMOTO (Japan) said that, in the current era of profound change in all areas, a steady, careful approach was needed in order to strike a balance among various interests of States in space-related activities. While the Outer Space Treaty characterized the exploration and use of outer space as the province of all mankind, its motivating principle was preventive diplomacy.

9. There was a need to consolidate international cooperation in tackling the new challenges. Japan was conscious of its responsibilities and was devoting much time and energy to its programme of environmental monitoring satellites, applying its advanced space technologies for the good of all mankind. Similarly, Japan was taking an active role in the work of COPUOS and was pleased to note that the Committee had completed its work on the draft principles on the use of nuclear power sources. A feature of the draft principles was their balanced expression, and when they came to be considered and reviewed, the essential criteria should be practicality, adaptability and stability.

10. On the question of space debris, Japan still had some doubts as to whether national research had progressed sufficiently to allow a useful discussion in the international forum but understood the concern of many delegations about the possible serious implications of space debris. It would therefore make no objection to the inclusion of the item in the agenda of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee. The discussion should however be directed towards striking a balance between the maximization of the effective use of orbits and the minimization of possible danger.

11. Japan shared the concern voiced by many countries about the lack of financial resources to implement the recommendations of the United Nations

(Mr. Yamamoto, Japan)

Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE 82), which remained an important goal. Thus it regarded as legitimate the request for an adequate budgetary allocation for the United Nations Programme on Space Applications, though the overall financial situation of the United Nations should, of course, be taken into account.

12. His delegation emphasized the need for further efforts to rationalize the work of COPUOS and welcomed the many suggestions and ideas put forward in that connection, particularly with respect to the work of the Legal Subcommittee. It had no doubt that, guided by that orientation, the work of COPUOS would be fruitful.

13. Mr. LOTFI (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that recent international political developments should encourage Member States, particularly the space Powers, to move towards the goal of preserving outer space exclusively for peaceful purposes.

14. He briefly described the current space-related activities being undertaken in Iran, particularly in the context of implementing the recommendations of the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE 82) concerning the development of indigenous capabilities. Work was under way, for example, to establish an Iranian national organization named the Iran Space Administration. His country was also ready to host a regional centre for space science and technology education, which would benefit the developing countries in particular. It was equally ready to welcome a mission to evaluate the measures already implemented with that purpose in mind. Meanwhile, it had established an Iranian remote sensing centre and would host a seminar on remote sensing in Tehran in December 1992, in addition to two major conferences - one on remote sensing in Asia and another relating to the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific - also in Tehran, in 1993.

15. His country planned to start operation of the Zohreh domestic satellite in 1995, which would enhance its communications infrastructure and drastically reform its telephone and television broadcasting networks, as well as its banking and health-care systems. Research and development activities would be carried out in order to develop satellite earth stations to be used as part of the domestic network.

16. His country, which often suffered severe earthquakes, had closely followed the work of the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator in the area of disaster management through efficient disaster communications. It supported the recommendations of the International Conference on Disaster Communications, as well as the convening of a conference in 1993 to negotiate an intergovernmental convention on disaster communications.

(Mr. Lotfi, Islamic Republic of Iran)

17. His country attached great importance to cooperation among the developing and developed countries at the bilateral, regional and international levels. In that respect, the United Nations Programme on Space Applications was of great importance and should be encouraged and supported. The transfer of technology, free access to satellite data at a suitable cost, and technical support could also narrow the existing gap between the developing and the developed countries.

18. Mr. CHINADE (Nigeria) said that the hope for a new world order created by the international climate of fruitful cooperation among States should include a firm commitment by the international community to preserve outer space for peaceful purposes.

19. In 1992, two important events relevant to the work and purposes of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space had taken place, namely, International Space Year and the tenth anniversary of UNISPACE 82. International Space Year, which was designed to promote international cooperation in space technology, would in turn contribute to the realization of the objectives of UNISPACE 82, particularly in the areas of resource management, public education and the safeguarding of the global environment.

20. Nigeria firmly believed in the fundamental principles and objectives which had informed the establishment of COPUOS in 1959, namely that outer space was the common heritage of mankind which should be explored and utilized exclusively for peaceful purposes, that there was a linkage between its exploration and the maintenance of international peace and security, and that its exploration should open up opportunities, particularly in the area of economic development and the social welfare of peoples through international cooperation among States.

21. In that respect, Nigeria had been happy to note the progress achieved by COPUOS, both in the Legal Subcommittee and in the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, since the last session of the General Assembly, particularly the adoption by consensus of the set of principles relevant to the use of nuclear power sources in outer space. Nigeria was willing to support any concrete measures that would further strengthen that set of principles and minimize the risk of accidents.

22. On the other hand, after a decade of work in the Legal Subcommittee, no appreciable progress had been made on matters relating to the definition and delimitation of outer space and in the character of utilization of the geostationary orbit. The time had come to resolve the issue definitively through constructive dialogue, bearing in mind that the definition and delimitation of outer space was a practical and legal necessity in order to have a clear distinction between airspace and outer space. That would put to rest such issues as concerns for security over national jurisdiction, as well as access to and equitable use of the orbit for development purposes.

(Mr. Chinade, Nigeria)

23. Similarly, if the principle that the exploration and utilization of space should be carried out for the benefit and in the interest of all States were included on the agenda of COPUOS, it would provide an opportunity for the international community to demonstrate in practical terms how the benefits from space exploration could be spread to all countries, particularly the disadvantaged developing countries. There should therefore be a strong commitment to the progressive development and codification as a legal norm of that principle.

24. Nigeria was especially interested in implementing the recommendations of UNISPACE 82 and was ready to host an African regional centre for space technology and science education. For that purpose, however, it would like to count on the international community and the competent agencies for adequate financial and technical assistance in order to ensure that the proposed centre was viable, responsible and responsive to the collective scientific aspiration of the African countries.

25. In the same vein, the United Nations space applications programme was most relevant to the developmental needs of the developing countries. Nigeria therefore endorsed the need to appeal to the international community for increased financial assistance to the programme, which had been remarkable in fulfilling its mandate, despite its worsening financial base.

26. The question of space debris was another area of concern to his delegation. He wished to reiterate that the issue could not be separated from the collective effort to safeguard the global environment from pollution. The fact that General Assembly resolution 46/45 had been adopted without a vote emphasized that it was a matter of concern for all countries. Space debris had now been added to the dangers already posed by the emission of toxic gases and chemical effluents into the earth environment. His delegation felt that the question of space debris should, as from 1993, be a distinct agenda item, which would then enable the issue to be discussed substantively in COPUOS.

27. There was growing awareness that space activities continued to produce spin-off benefits, bringing new techniques in various fields (such as industrial measurement, image and data processing, food security, water treatment). There was an urgent need to develop and strengthen international cooperation in that area, and especially to give the developing countries access to the resulting benefits. The major space Powers and technologically advanced countries should significantly increase their bilateral and multilateral financing for training and technical assistance programmes and engage in joint ventures with developing countries. The spin-off benefits should be disseminated quickly to other countries through trade, education, technical assistance and exchange of information relating to actual or potential spin-off technologies or other forms of technological transfer.

28. The favourable developments in the international environment would seem to indicate that the international community was on the verge of finding

(Mr. Chinade, Nigeria)

solutions to issues that had previously been insoluble because of the cold war rivalry, which, it appeared, was a thing of the past. Nigeria also believed that such new-found cooperation must be used to pool resources so as to reorient science, technology and technical expertise towards the development of poor, underdeveloped countries in a determined effort to help them enjoy the benefits of space technology. For that reason, Nigeria fully supported the convening of a third UNISPACE conference, at a date to be determined in 1995, to assess the gains made as a result of UNISPACE 82 and chart a course of action for the twenty-first century. The Committee should, at its current session, put in place the necessary machinery for preparing such a conference.

29. Mr. HODGKINS (United States of America), said that there was no doubt that the dramatic changes that continued to take place on the world political scene presented real possibilities for broadening international cooperation. The challenge was to seek opportunities to strengthen the role of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space as the chief advocate in the United Nations system for cooperation in the peaceful uses of space. That being the case, at future sessions of the Committee and its subcommittees, efforts should be increased to deepen the scientific and technical content of the deliberations and to avoid the inclusion of issues such as disarmament, which were more appropriately handled in other forums.

30. The past year had been a productive one for the Committee, as illustrated by the celebration of International Space Year (ISY), a historic world-wide effort dedicated to the spirit of discovery, exploration and cooperation among the world's space scientists, engineers, administrators and policy makers. It was in fact an American Senator who had launched the concept of ISY to commemorate the quincentenary of the voyage of Christopher Columbus to the Americas and the thirty-fifth anniversary of International Geophysical Year. In addition to the work done through the United Nations Programme on Space Applications, concrete results had been realized through the Space Agency Forum on International Space Year, which had coordinated ISY activities in the field of earth science and technology, space science, and education and training. The projects included analysis of scientific data, conferences and programmes to interest young people and the general public in space exploration.

31. His delegation States felt that, though some real progress had been made in reforming the working methods of the Committee and its two subcommittees, the substantial changes required to render them more effective had not yet been made. It applauded the action taken by the Legal Subcommittee to improve its efficiency. In the coming year it would evaluate the future organization of the work of the Legal Subcommittee and was confident that the spirit of cooperation and compromise that had characterized the work of the previous year would yield positive results.

32. Regarding the principles relevant to the use of nuclear power sources in outer space, the United States had not blocked the consensus recommendation of

(Mr. Hodgkins, United States)

the Committee to submit the text of the principles to the General Assembly, nor would it oppose their adoption by the Assembly; it continued to believe, however, that those principles did not yet have the requisite clarity and technical validity to guide the safe use of nuclear power sources in space.

33. Principle 11 called for review and revision of those principles within two years, and the United States strongly believed that that would be necessary. It had voted in favour of the principles on the understanding that principle 3 would be revised. In fact, such review and revision should begin at the coming sessions of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and the Legal Subcommittee. In that way the Committee could ensure that the principles relating to safe use of nuclear power sources in outer space were technically sound and consistent with United States safety practices, which were founded on an approach that was technically clearer and more valid.

34. Mr. POSSO SERRANO (Ecuador) said that his country shared a common position with the members of the Rio Group, to which it belonged. He stressed that Ecuador's position had always involved support to any initiative intended to encourage international cooperation towards universal, non-discriminatory access of all countries to space technology and the advantages of the rational exploitation of space resources and the establishment of special juridical systems whenever necessary. Two fundamental principles were applied in that respect: outer space must be used exclusively for peaceful purposes and the needs of developing countries must be taken into account.

35. The question of the geostationary orbit was a subject of continuing concern to the Ecuadorian delegation, for discussions were at a standstill. The question had been approached from different angles, but no effort had been made to change the substance of the traditional view. The geostationary orbit had a unique character and constituted a limited natural resource that could be exhausted. Irrational exploitation was liable to saturate it and close it to all further use, not to mention the fact that it was the source of considerable space debris. Certain major economic interests and multinational corporations had, in their desire for profit, managed so far to conceal the evidence, namely, that the geostationary orbit had special characteristics in that the plane of the equator offered unique possibilities for putting in place geosynchronous satellites.

36. Currently that resource was being exploited irresponsibly and irrationally. No account was taken of the special characteristics of the Earth's equatorial plane, and the interests of certain countries were totally disregarded. It was for that reason that Ecuador emphasized that a *sui generis* juridical system based on equity and international cooperation must be established to govern the use of the geostationary orbit and guarantee its exploitation for the benefit of all mankind, recognizing the needs of developing countries and, in particular, the special geographic situation of certain States. Only when such a special juridical system was recognized

(Mr. Posso Serrano, Ecuador)

would the international community be able to permit the equitable use of that resource and the rational enjoyment of its advantages, taking into account the situation of the equatorial countries, which was special in two respects - their geographic situation and their particular development needs.

37. As the question was juridical in nature, and in view of the fact that the Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space Including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies (1967) did not regulate the use of the geostationary orbit, his delegation urged that a political solution should be sought to the problem, and that initial responsibility for that task should be entrusted to the Committee's Legal Subcommittee rather than to the International Telecommunication Union, as some were suggesting, for the problem went beyond the use of the radio-frequency spectrum.

The meeting rose at 4.25 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FORTY-SEVENTH SESSION

Official Records

SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE
7th meeting
held on
Thursday, 29 October 1992
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 7th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KHOUINI (Tunisia)

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AGENDA ITEM 72: INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN THE PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE (continued)

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6 November 1992

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The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 72: INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN THE PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE (continued) (A/47/20, A/47/383)

1. Mr. PLUMBLY (United Kingdom), speaking on behalf of the European Community, said that it was becoming increasingly obvious how space could be used peacefully for the benefit of the planet. Space-based telecommunications, remote sensing and research were improving communication between nations and providing valuable data on environmental problems and the physics of micro-gravity.

2. The growth in the use of space for peaceful purposes was a welcome development in the wake of the cold war, when space technology was more often associated with warfare. In the framework of European space cooperation, closer relations were being sought with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Furthermore, because much of the work carried out in space was often of a cooperative nature, the peaceful use of outer space augured well for closer cooperation on Earth.

3. The European Community and its member States recognized the importance of using space for peaceful purposes and appreciated the benefits flowing from such activities. The European Community was committed to playing its part in promoting international cooperation in the space field by establishing technical and scientific programmes and by encouraging multilateral, regional and bilateral space activities.

4. He commended the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) and its Chairman for the role they played in establishing the legal framework of conventions and principles that had been crucial to achieving the goals of international cooperation and peaceful uses of outer space.

5. He hoped that the Committee would adopt the draft resolution (A/SPC/47/L.5) on International Cooperation in the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space by consensus, as in previous years.

6. He also commended the Legal and the Scientific and Technical Subcommittees of the Committee for their patient but persistent efforts in reaching consensus on the draft principles relevant to the use of nuclear power sources in outer space. The European Community fully appreciated the need for absolute clarity in stating the principles, and it recognized the complications attendant upon any negotiation concerning such a rapidly changing technology. As new nuclear power technology in space continued to develop, so should the principles. It would be necessary to revisit - and perhaps revise - the principles in the near future in order to ensure that they were in step with technological progress.

7. He supported the view of the General Assembly - and of many delegations to the Committee - that the topic of space debris should be added to the

(Mr. Plumbly, United Kingdom)

agenda of future meetings of COPUOS. However he also recognized that in order for such a discussion to be worthwhile and relevant, it should be based on sound research.

8. Another issue deserving urgent attention by COPUOS was the contribution that space science could make to solving environmental problems. The Committee was well-placed to play a role in implementing some of the recommendations arising from the recent United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. He welcomed States members of COPUOS to submit views on how the Committee could contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the Conference. The European Community also wished that the use of space science in tackling the world's environmental problems would eventually be added to the agenda at future COPUOS meetings.

9. The work of European Community member States in the area of space science during 1992 demonstrated the interest of the Community in that subject. For example, there was an initiative set in train by the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom to improve dialogue among space agencies and environmental users and to increase the use of satellite data in national and international environmental programmes. As follow-up to that initiative, Germany was plannning a conference in November of 1992 to discuss the coordination of the requirements of satellite data users in Europe. The European Community strongly supported such coordination exercises in other regions of the world, especially among users of remote sensing in developing countries.

10. The Community and its member States were grateful for the United Nations initiative to establish - through the United Nations Programme on Space Applications regional centres for space science and technology education in existing educational research institutions. He also welcomed the fact that those centres had the potential to contribute significantly to the implementation of the recommendations of the Rio Conference. During 1992, the States members of the European Community had been enthusiastic participants in the International Space Year and had carried out a wide range of activities at both the national and multinational levels. Representatives from a number of European Community member States had organized workshops with the aim of communicating the importance of space technologies - especially to young people. The Twelve welcomed the recommendation in the report on the thirty-fifth session of COPUOS (A/47/20) that the United Nations should encourage the continuation of International Space Year activities beyond the end of 1992 and support the involvement of even more nations in the initiative.

11. He expressed the wish that the renewed optimism and spirit of cooperation evident in the Committee following the agreement on the principles on the use of nuclear power sources would be translated into programmes of action of benefit to all nations.

12. Mr. RYDBERG (Sweden) said that space research and applications had a significant role to play in helping humanity to achieve sustainable development of the material and human potential of the planet and that the use of space technology for environmental protection could be of particular utility in that regard. It was therefore not coincidental that International Space Year 1992 should coincide with the holding of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro. The activities carried out during International Space Year could facilitate the realization of the goals set and the agreements concluded at the Rio Conference. That applied in general to the monitoring of important aspects of the global environment. As part of Sweden's contribution to International Space Year, eight research projects had been carried out representing a variety of remote sensing applications in the field of forestry planning and management. The research covered forests in Sweden, Africa and Asia. As an expression of its support for the United Nations Programme on Space Applications, Sweden had also offered a five-week course in remote sensing techniques for university teachers in countries in Africa, South-East Asia and South America. International Space Year had also seen the launching of Sweden's second scientific satellite. The craft was designed to carry instruments for research into the aurora and to investigate other magnetospheric/ionospheric phenomena.

13. In 1992, the Special Political Committee had the particularly gratifying task of reviewing the draft principles relevant to the use of nuclear power sources in outer space (A/47/20, annex). His delegation wished to thank the Chairman of COPUOS for the skilful way in which he had conducted the final stage of negotiations and looked forward to the adoption of the principles by the General Assembly. The principles identified techniques and procedures to minimize the quantity of radioactive material in space, and provided for a series of actions to be taken both before and after launch to minimize the risk of accidents and to mitigate their consequences. His delegation supported the idea of amending the principles if and when developments in space technology required such modifications.

14. His Government believed that the question of the outer space environment, particularly the problem of space debris, should be inscribed on the agenda of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee of COPUOS. The efforts taken by COPUOS and its Subcommittees to streamline their working methods had resulted in progress. Such efforts formed part of the overall effort to ensure that the Committee remained an effective and able instrument for responding to growing challenges in a changing global environment.

15. Mr. CHIARADIA (Argentina), speaking also on behalf of the members of the Rio Group, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico, Paraguay, Uruguay and Venezuela, said that 1992 had been a particularly productive year for COPUOS, which had adopted a set of principles on the use of nuclear power sources in outer space. Those principles constituted an important step forward in preventing accidents involving radioactive debris, and it was to be hoped that the General Assembly would adopt them. They also

(Mr. Chiaradia, Argentina)

constituted a further step in the progressive development of a legal structure regulating space activities. Throughout its existence, COPUOS had been one of the subsidiary bodies of the General Assembly which had contributed most to international law, and the countries for which he spoke were committed to encouraging and reinforcing its work.

16. One of the noteworthy events held within the framework of International Space Year had been the Space Conference for the Americas organized by the Government of Chile. That Conference had provided an opportunity to discuss specific and practical methods of international and regional cooperation in such areas as natural resource detection, the study of space law and the use of remote television for educational purposes.

17. It was disappointing that most of the recommendations of UNISPACE 82 had not yet been implemented. The Rio Group supported in principle the idea of a third United Nations conference, inter alia, to evaluate the results of UNISPACE 82 and considered that it would be desirable for such a conference to be held in a developing country. In that context, he noted that the Outer Space Division was continuing its work towards establishing a United Nations regional centre for education in space science and technology in the Latin American region. The number of countries which had shown interest in becoming the host of such a centre was an indication of the interest the idea aroused in the region.

18. The Office for Outer Space Affairs and the United Nations Programme on Space Applications continued to work with effectiveness and enthusiasm in spite of the limitations of their resources. The Rio Group supported the proposal made by the Group of 77 to provide them with greater resources so that they could continue to work for the benefit of the international community and especially the developing countries.

19. The Legal Subcommittee had also worked intensively during 1992, and was to be congratulated on its success in reaching agreement on a set of principles for the use of nuclear energy sources in outer space. The Working Group involved was also to be congratulated on its success and the Rio Group would continue to participate actively in the future work of reviewing, implementing and strengthening those principles.

20. The Working Group on the definition and delimitation of outer space had carried out an interesting discussion on the basis of a working document submitted by the Russian Federation (A/AC.105/514, annex IV, sect. 13) on the future use of aerospace objects which, it was to be hoped, would make possible further progress on that basic aspect of space law.

21. The Working Group on the geostationary orbit had discussed a document submitted by some members of the Group of 77. The Rio Group considered that document constructive and deserving of detailed analysis for the purpose of overcoming the obstacles which had impeded adequate treatment of that subject.

(Mr. Chiaradia, Argentina)

22. A substantive debate on the legal principles relating to the principle of the use of outer space for the benefit of all States, taking into special account the needs of the developing countries, had been carried out in the relevant Working Group on the basis of working paper A/AC.105/C.2/L.182. A revised version of that document would be submitted by its sponsors in the light of the proposals and comments made in connection with it.

23. In 1992, COPUOS had again examined the subject of the means for the preservation of outer space for peaceful purposes. In that context, the Rio Group called on all Governments to comply strictly with article IV of the Outer Space Treaty as well as a greater exchange of information between the Ad Hoc Committee on the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space and COPUOS.

24. It was to be hoped that the General Assembly would shortly approve the set of principles on the use of nuclear energy sources in outer space, and thus make room in the agenda of COPUOS for other questions, such as that of the preservation of the environment in outer space. Such preservation would ensure the future use of outer space for all and protect the environment and security of the planet. A discussion of the question might usefully be begun at the Committee's next session.

25. Mr. YELCHENKO (Ukraine) said that since its independence, Ukraine had sought to broaden its participation in all spheres of international cooperation including the field of space exploration.

26. He commended COPUOS for its work in establishing a system of principles for the exploitation of space for the benefit of all countries. Although the problems concerning the international use of space were becoming increasingly complex, the long-standing tradition of fruitful cooperation and the spirit of compromise preserved in COPUOS would make it possible to find acceptable solutions.

27. The last session of COPUOS had restored the confidence of everyone that it had a true role to play in promoting international cooperation in exploring outer space. That confidence could be enhanced still further by identifying specific promising areas of international cooperation and by reaching agreement on a particular form of cooperation in each area. One priority for such cooperation could be the protection and preservation of space itself. In the part of its work touching on that question the Committee had been guided by relevant decisions at the Rio Conference on Environment and Development, and had benefited from the able guidance of Mr. Peter Hohenfellner, the distinguished chairman of COPUOS, who had helped to achieve a consensus on the question of nuclear power sources.

28. He stressed the importance of the Committee's recommendation to the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly to adopt the principles relevant to the use of nuclear power sources in outer space (A/47/20, annex), and said that although nuclear power sources represented a step forward in the

(Mr. Yelchenko, Ukraine)

exploration and utilization of outer space, they also carried some potential danger. As a result of the Chernobyl disaster, Ukraine was especially sensitive to the need for a reasonable balance between nuclear and other sources of energy for spacecraft, but remained ready for close international cooperation in efforts to reduce to a minimum the possibility of accidents in on-board nuclear power sources. The definition and delimitation of outer space was another important problem. His Government believed that outer space should be legally delimited and open to free exploration and utilization by all countries. Regarding the problem of the use of the geostationary orbit, he believed that there was only one possible solution, i.e., to get more use out of spacecraft in the geostationary orbit in the interest of the entire international community. Work along those lines in COPUOS should be commended and continued.

29. The exploration and use of space by Ukraine was one of his Government's priorities, as was demonstrated by the establishment by presidental decree of a national space agency. Despite the difficulties of economic transition, Ukraine maintained a well-developed scientific and technological base and a modern space industry. Its scientific and technological facilities had been integrated into the powerful space infrastructure of the former Soviet Union, producing strategic rockets, rocket launchers, spacecraft and related systems, as well as basic research equipment. Ukraine envisioned close international cooperation in the field of exploration and use of outer space. The first step in such cooperation would be Ukraine's admission to the international organizations dealing with space activities, particularly the European Space Agency and INTELSAT. Ukraine also intended to strengthen its ties with other recently independent States, and had ratified a number of relevant agreements within the framework of the Commonwealth of Independent States in Minsk and Tashkent. The main elements of the Ukrainian space programme would include basic scientific research, monitoring of natural resources and national security activities.

30. Ukraine was firmly opposed to the militarization of outer space; it viewed its security as being integrally linked to the security of the world as a whole. In that spirit, the Ukrainian space programme had made provision for the conversion of the rocket and space industry to peaceful uses, but that was an extremely complex and costly undertaking in practice. Nevertheless, Ukraine intended to adhere to that policy and was prepared to engage in broad-based international cooperation to implement it. His Government had already made a number of practical proposals concerning the commercial use of facilities for the launching of strategic missles and systems for monitoring and forecasting seismic activity on earth by means of remote sensing.

31. Mr. MATEEM-UR-REHMAN (Pakistan) said that the agreement reached by COPUOS on a set of principles relevant to the use of nuclear power sources in outer space constituted a major achievement, which his delegation was confident would receive the unanimous support of the General Assembly. It was to be hoped that the Committee's future deliberations would also be characterized by

(Mr. Mateem-Ur-Rehman, Pakistan)

such fruitful cooperation, in particular, on the priority item entitled "Ways and means of maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes". The increased militarization of outer space was a matter of serious concern and a complete halt in all militarized activities was the only way to stop an arms race there. His delegation had always supported the position that it was within the Committee's competence to discuss that matter, especially in view of the fact that military activities in space would seriously damage the efforts towards international cooperation in the exploration and peaceful uses of outer space.

32. His delegation also shared the view that there was a need to promote international cooperation for the exclusive use of outer space for peaceful purposes, taking into particular account the needs of the developing countries. The idea of holding international and regional programmes as part of such international efforts as International Space Year was extremely useful.

33. The reorientation of the United Nations Programme on Space Applications in accordance with the recommendations of UNISPACE 82 had helped it to provide, particularly to the developing countries, information on space technology and applications in general and remote-sensing applications in particular, through the organization of training programmes, workshops and seminars. In that regard, the efforts made by the United Nations Expert on Space Applications were laudable.

34. His country believed that the spread of scientific and technological expertise through international cooperative activities, including the holding of seminars, symposiums, training courses and meetings of experts, would strengthen international cooperation and that consideration should be given to measures for further strengthening of the Programme on Space Applications and other related activities within the United Nations system. It favoured greater coordination of the programmes of space technology applications being implemented by the various United Nations agencies, and shared the concern expressed with regard to the lack of adequate financial resources for the Programme and related activities.

35. Pakistan supported the Committee's recommendation that further discussions should be held on the possibility of holding a third United Nations space conference. Such an event would provide an impetus to further expand international cooperation in that field, in particular, through greater involvement of the developing countries.

36. The Principles relating to Remote Sensing of the Earth from Outer Space had been adopted as long ago as 1986 but would remain devoid of any regulatory aspects unless they were given legal force. An effort should therefore be made to formulate specific recommendations to translate those Principles into some form of international agreement.

(Mr. Mateem-Ur-Rehman, Pakistan)

37. His delegation shared the concern expressed with regard to the over-commercialization of remote-sensing activities. The pricing of remote-sensing data products and access fees for data reception should, in particular, take into account the ability of the developing countries to pay, as otherwise the benefits from such technology would remain beyond their reach. Noting the lack of progress with respect to the item on the definition and delimitation of outer space and the character and utilization of the geostationary orbit, as well as the legal aspects of the exploration and utilization of outer space for the benefit and in the interest of all States, he expressed the hope that the same spirit of cooperation that had characterized the discussions on the principles of nuclear power sources would be reflected in future deliberations of COPUOS on those items.

38. On the issue of space and the environment, his delegation considered that greater attention must be paid to the serious problem of space debris and the possibility of collision of space objects with space debris. He endorsed the view that the subject should be included in the agenda of COPUOS or its Scientific and Technical and Legal Subcommittees beginning with the next session.

39. Mr. BHAGAT (India) said that the benefits accruing from the exploration of outer space could not reach all humankind if utilization of outer space was not maintained exclusively for peaceful purposes. India was strongly committed to the peaceful uses of outer space, and its space programme had placed emphasis on developing indigenous capabilities, with appropriate international cooperation, and utilizing space technology in areas relevant to the country's rapid development.

40. The momentum generated by the activities during International Space Year of 1992, in which emphasis had been placed on harnessing the increased use of space technology to solve global problems, must be maintained, indeed enhanced, in order to ensure the widest spread of benefits to all nations.

41. In that context, it was a source of great satisfaction to India that the Indian Space Programme had made significant advances, including the commencement of operations of the Indian-built IRS-1B satellite launched on 29 August 1991, which had been assisting users in the management of renewable natural resources in such fields as forestry, land use, agriculture, water resources and sustainable development of resources at the village level. In order to promote international cooperation, the Indian Government had adopted a policy of making available data from IRS satellites to other interested countries. Another major achievement of the Indian Space Programme during the International Space Year had been the launch of INSAT-2A on 9 July 1992. That satellite, the first of the second generation series of multi-purpose satellites built in India for deployment in the geostationary orbit, was the first geostationary satellite to carry equipment to provide an alert for search and rescue operations, complementing the already available international COSPAS-SARSAT system which was based on low Earth orbit. There

(Mr. Bhagat, India)

had also been a successful launching of the third developmental flight of the Indian Launch Vehicle ASLV-D3 on 20 May 1992, which had placed in orbit a 106 kg satellite carrying scientific equipment to study the equatorial ionosphere and thermosphere and to study celestial gamma ray bursts and their temporal variations.

42. In the context of International Space Year, India had also undertaken several important studies in space sciences relating to such subjects as the monsoon, migration of climatic zones, and other subjects relevant to the international community's major concerns with respect to understanding global change phenomena.

43. It was appropriate that as part of the celebration of International Space Year, COPUOS had convened a special meeting at the beginning of the session to consider new approaches to international cooperation. Some of the recommendations which had emerged from the meeting were worthy of the Assembly's attention in guiding the future work of the Committee, in particular the recommendation concerning the discussion of the holding of a third United Nations conference on outer space. Such a conference, in India's view, would consolidate the momentum provided by International Space Year and could develop follow-up actions and mechanisms to further broaden the scope of international cooperation. It should also be aimed at promoting increased participation by the developing countries in space activities.

44. During the past year COPUOS had also actively reviewed the implementation of the recommendations of UNISPACE 82, reaching the conclusion that several recommendations had not yet been fully implemented and should be taken up for further implementation on an urgent basis. His delegation would particularly stress the need to stimulate the growth of indigenous nuclei and an autonomous technology base in space technology in developing countries. In that connection, it again recalled the recommendations of UNISPACE 82 that there should be free exchange of scientific and technological information and arrangements for transfer of technologies to promote use and development of space technology in the developing countries. Appropriate international understandings should be developed urgently on that matter in order to assist developing countries. His delegation also endorsed the efforts of the Committee to establish regional centres for space science and technology education in developing countries to promote the development of indigenous capability.

45. The consensus reached on the principles governing the use of nuclear power sources in outer space represented an important milestone in the progress of the Committee's work. It was also important to achieve further progress on that agenda item in the Legal Subcommittee on the basis of the working paper put forward by several developing countries (A/AC.105/C.2/L.182).

46. His delegation had consistently emphasized the urgent need to maintain the integrity of the outer space environment and shared the concerns of those

(Mr. Bhagat, India)

who felt that increasing debris in outer space, particularly in certain bands, represented a potential danger to future activities in space. It was therefore important that the international community should study ways in which international cooperation could be organized to track and monitor debris, to take measures to regulate its growth and minimize the risk of its collision with space objects or humans operating in space. There was a need for the immediate inclusion of the subject of space debris in the agenda of the Outer Space Committee and its Scientific and Technical Subcommittee.

47. Mr. GALBADRAKH (Mongolia) said that, under the impetus of the observances connected with International Space Year, the international community had done much to promote the peaceful uses of outer space, particularly through greater cooperation and exchange of ideas in the field, the application of space technologies to economic and social problems, and environmental and climate monitoring. Mongolia's National Space Year Programme had focused on environmental monitoring and had sponsored studies on early-warning systems for national disasters and on natural resource assessment. The general public had been kept informed of International Space Year activities nationally and internationally, and institutions of higher learning had been involved in space application efforts. Also, in early October, the thirteenth Asian Conference on Remote Sensing had been held in Ulaanbaatar and, for the more than 20 countries attending, had been an excellent source of information on the applications of remote sensing to mining, land use, pasture distribution and forestry.

48. Mongolia welcomed the conclusion by COPUOS of its work on the draft principles relevant to the use of nuclear power sources in outer space, a major achievement. It agreed that the issue of space debris should be assigned to its Scientific and Technical Subcommittee for further study, and that the very valuable United Nations Programme on Space Applications, which ought to be adequately funded, should each year consider taking up the topic of spin-off benefits of space technology.

49. The tenth anniversary of UNISPACE 82 was a fitting occasion for an overall assessment of the implementation of its recommendations and for identification of priorities that needed attention.

50. Ms. DAPUL (Philippines) said that the endorsement by the Committee on Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS), of a set of principles intended to ensure the safe use of nuclear power sources in outer space ranked among the most vital achievements in international cooperation in outer space. The use of those sources should be based on a thorough safety assessment, with particular emphasis on reducing the risk of accidental exposure of the public to harmful radiation. The hazards to man and the environment of unplanned re-entry into the Earth's atmosphere of malfunctioning space objects with nuclear power sources on board were obvious. Her delegation felt that those principles should be embodied in a legal instrument enforceable under international law.

(Ms. Dapul, Philippines)

51. The Philippines, which had supported the discussion of the problem of space debris in the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, was baffled by the delay in inscribing the question in the agendas of the two Subcommittees of COPUOS. The liability and responsibility for space debris should be identified early in view of the risk to the space environment and consequently the Earth's environment. The need for further research on the subject should not be used as an excuse for ignoring the problem.

52. The question of space debris demonstrated the need for the development of space law. The Philippines attached importance to the legal aspects of the principle that the exploration and utilization of outer space should benefit all States, including those with no space capabilities, with particular account being taken of the needs of developing countries. The development of a legal framework to govern cooperation in the use of outer space was imperative. Her delegation hoped that substantive work on that subject would commence soon in a duly constituted working group.

53. The Philippines relied heavily on remote sensing data in mapping resources, studying the environment and coping with natural disasters, and was thus concerned over the growing commercialization of remote sensing activities. Remote sensing products and access fees should be made affordable to countries with economic difficulties such as the Philippines. Her delegation thus advocated regular meetings between satellite operators, ground stations and users to discuss those issues and the need to ensure the continuity, compatibility and complementarity of remote sensing systems. Such cooperation was essential for optimizing the use of space technology for sustainable development.

54. Her delegation had requested COPUOS to accord top priority to international cooperation in space for the benefit of developing countries. It had noted an increase in such cooperation among space-faring countries, but deplored the paucity of cooperation between space-faring and non-space-faring nations outside the programmes sponsored by the United Nations.

55. The use of outer space had done little to reduce the gap between the developed and the developing countries. Programmes must be designed for the needs of the developing, not the developed, countries.

56. The success of International Space Year would depend on the development of mechanisms for continuing and extending cooperation. The Philippines called attention to the lack of financing to implement the UNISPACE 82 recommendations and the activities of the United Nations Programme on Space Applications and urged space-faring nations to contribute to that programme. Such a contribution would be a long-term investment, since developing countries were both potential and current users of space technology applications. Space technology had demonstrated its power to unite mankind, and it was only through cooperation in protecting and preserving our planet that we could ensure our own survival.

57. Mr. TELLES RIBEIRO (Brazil) said that his delegation fully endorsed the views expressed by the delegation of Argentina on its behalf. It wished to make some additional remarks on issues of particular interest to it.

58. Within the context of International Space Year, Brazil had hosted the World Forest Watch Conference on Remote Sensing Monitoring, sponsored by the Brazilian National Institute for Space Research and the Joint Research Centre, in addition to hosting the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. It was essential to find ways in which the work of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space might help to implement the decisions taken at Rio de Janeiro.

59. Though there had been a reduction of tension as a result of a slowdown in the arms race, the new international climate had not yet brought enhanced international cooperation for the peaceful uses of outer space. As outer space activities encompassed all branches of knowledge, they were highly suited to joint endeavours. One should therefore seek to combine indigenous efforts and external cooperation in the most productive way.

60. The prevention of the arms race in outer space was inseparable from the maintenance of outer space for peaceful purposes. His delegation felt that COPUOS should complement the work under way in bilateral and multilateral forums with a view to preventing an extension of the arms race into outer space and should be informed on the progress of the discussions held within the framework of the Conference on Disarmament. It could also enhance the work of the Conference in areas such as transparency and confidence-building measures.

61. It was the understanding of his delegation that the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, being an intergovernmental forum, should confer priority to policies and guidelines for international cooperation in space activities and be able to provide agreed technical parameters for the development of international space law. His country, despite severe financial constraints, had participated in the programme of long-term fellowships for 1992-1993, and urged Member States to contribute to the funding of the United Nations Programme on Space Applications.

62. His delegation had noted with satisfaction the visit of an evaluation mission sent to Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Mexico for the establishment of a centre for space science and technology education in Latin America and the Caribbean. It also supported the suggestion that a third UNISPACE conference should be held and noted with appreciation that the thirty-fifth session of COPUOS had welcomed the Chilean initiative to host a space conference to be held in January 1993.

63. Mr. FUJITA (Brazil) said that his delegation wished to express its satisfaction concerning the completion by the thirty-fifth session of COPUOS of a set of Principles Relevant to the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space. The resulting document was the fruit of more than 12 years of hard

(Mr. Fujita, Brazil)

work and constituted an important contribution to the development of international space law. It was a compromise text reflecting a delicate balance of expectations and frustrations, but the international community as a whole would be the final beneficiary.

64. The text agreed on at the thirty-fifth session of COPUOS was the result of negotiations held at the thirty-first session of the Legal Subcommittee, in Geneva. His delegation had noted that some of the versions of the report of COPUOS (A/47/20), published in the different official languages of the Organization, contained passages that diverged somewhat from the purport of the original non-papers, which were all in English. It was the view of his delegation that, in respect of principle 4, Safety Assessment, to which Brazil attached great importance, the English version was authentic, reflecting the understandings reached.

65. At the thirtieth session of the Legal Subcommittee (1991) a number of delegations had submitted a working paper on "Principles regarding international cooperation in the exploration and utilization of outer space for peaceful purposes" (A/AC.105/C.2/L.182). The main objectives were to promote transparency, predictability, equity, effectiveness and mutual benefits in international cooperation in outer space, which would facilitate the dissemination of space benefits and the flow of space technologies and foster indigenous space capabilities. The main thrust of principle I was that States with space capabilities should promote cooperation in outer space science and technology with countries less advanced in those fields. Principle II, in referring to special treatment for developing countries, was not intended to limit the freedom of States to enter into bilateral or regional cooperation arrangements, but rather to supplement such arrangements on a wider level. The idea of access on a "timely basis" did not mean that States must grant to other States any and all knowledge derived from space activities, but rather referred to adequate access compatible with the recipient country's capability to absorb space technologies and applications. The words "equitable, non-discriminatory and timely basis" could be traced back to the 1986 Principles relating to Remote Sensing of the Earth from Outer Space and were relevant to the current exercise. The notion of "special treatment" to be granted to developing countries should not give rise to misinterpretation, and concepts such as "no reciprocity" simply reflected the difficulties experienced by developing countries in paying on the same basis as the more advanced countries, not necessarily implying the compulsory granting of cooperation on concessional terms. Concerning principle III it should be borne in mind that the transactions referred to must be freely agreed to by the parties.

66. His delegation, together with the other sponsors of the document, was undertaking a careful review of its wording in the light of suggestions received during the thirty-first session of the Legal Subcommittee and intended to present in the near future a new version that would take into account the views of the broadest possible universe of parties concerned.

67. Mr. SEARLE (Chile) observed that the widespread use of satellite technology had at a certain level already fostered global interdependence and that its proper use could promote the economic and social development of the peoples of the world. The exact, reliable information provided by satellite as events were taking place should not only prompt countries to give immediate assistance in humanitarian and other crises, but also inspire more effective preventive diplomacy. Even nations that were passive beneficiaries of space technology had to band together and share the cost of acquiring satellite technology of their own, since that would give them a stronger negotiating position vis-à-vis the small club of industrial countries currently controlling the technology.

68. Nations should be helped through international cooperation to acquire more accurate information about their own natural resources by means of remote sensing, without, however, relinquishing their sovereign right over their resources. Specific legal regulation of that and other areas of space activities was needed, and hence the importance of having the Legal Subcommittee of COPUOS consider the item on the use of space for the benefit of all. Preliminary discussion in its Working Group, chaired by Chile, had indicated a widespread readiness to expand cooperation and transfer of technology on equitable and environmentally protective bases, and a common desire to establish a legal framework that would provide balanced access by all nations to the benefits of space technology.

69. The second Space Conference of the Americas to be held in 1993 in Chile would undoubtedly spawn projects crucial to the economic and social development of the countries involved and ensure their participation in contemporary technology. Chile was sympathetic to the proposal to convene a third UNISPACE conference in 1995 in a developing country, because regular updating was required given the rapid developments in space technology, as was a progressive development of space law to keep pace with them. Improved satellite telecommunications in the service of the environment should be a priority issue for discussion. At the same time there was the moral imperative to see to it that, as the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development had urged, the least developed countries as well benefited from scientific advances.

70. The question of the geostationary orbit concerned his Government, because it was no secret that whoever controlled the orbit could come to control global telecommunications, with a pernicious and destabilizing impact on national identities and on multiracialism. Technical regulation by the International Telecommunication Union was not sufficient: an approach addressing the political aspects was in order. His delegation still believed that the background paper (A/AC.105/C.2/L.187) submitted by Chile at the thirty-first session of the Legal Subcommittee offered a good basis for consensus on the matter, although some delegations seemed for the moment to have no real intention of cooperating.

(Mr. Searle, Chile)

71. On the subject of developing space law governing the prevention of the militarization of space, certain States had, again, for political reasons been blocking any progress by COPUOS, maintaining that it was a matter for discussion rather by the Conference on Disarmament. Yet COPUOS could bring experience and technical expertise to the question. Chile therefore proposed the possible establishment of an inter-institutional mechanism or a group of experts to promote research and greater openness in space activities, in order to ensure the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes. Such peaceful purposes did not, of course, preclude certain military functions such as those performed by satellites verifying compliance with disarmament treaties or monitoring border crises.

72. International security had six interrelated aspects: the military, the political, the economic, the scientific and technical, the socio-cultural and the environmental; and the second Space Conference of the Americas would address all of them. Concerted action, preferably regional, was necessary if technology was to be applied to alleviating poverty, if communications education in far-flung areas was to be expanded, long-distance medical diagnoses provided, and pollution controlled. At the same time, a third UNISPACE conference could be the a focal point for future international cooperation on space activities and their applications.

73. Mr. ORDZHONIKIDZE (Russian Federation) said that his Government was convinced of the need to expand and strengthen international cooperation in the peaceful exploitation of outer space and recognized its responsibility to fulfil the international obligations undertaken by the former Soviet Union concerning the peaceful use of outer space. Cooperation with the United Nations on space issues was a high priority in the foreign policy of the Russian Federation.

74. The effectiveness of the Organization in activities relating to outer space was due above all to the work of COPUOS which could take credit for a long list of achievements in elaborating international agreements, conducting research, organizing international conferences, and administering programmes on the practical application of space technologies. Of particular significance in that connection was the set of legal Principles concerning the use of nuclear energy sources in outer space (A/AC.105/513) which had been approved by COPUOS and had been taken up by the General Assembly at its current session.

75. The Russian Federation was striving in a variety of ways to strengthen the legal basis for cooperation among all Governments - including those of the former Soviet Union - in the study and exploration of outer space. His Government attached great importance to the agreement that it had signed, together with other members of the Commonwealth of Independent States, on joint space activities. The signers of the agreement had undertaken to plan their activities in accordance with existing norms of international law and to coordinate efforts to find solutions for outstanding international legal

(Mr. Ordzhonikidze, Russian Federation)

problems in the space field. Pursuant to an agreement between the Russian Federation and the United States, concrete plans were being implemented for a variety of space projects, including joint manned space flights, and a new mechanism was being instituted for evaluation at high levels of Government of the results of cooperation in the space field.

76. As a result of the development of international legal norms regarding outer space, and of the need for greater involvement of the United Nations in resolving questions of trust and predictability in outer space activities, his Government supported the intensification of COPUOS efforts to elaborate norms and principles regulating specific space activities. In that regard, he suggested that consideration be given to the legal aspects of the use of aerospace systems with the possible aim of regulating such systems under international law. The growing problem of space debris was also of great concern to his Government, and he supported the proposal for COPUOS and its Subcommittees to examine the legal aspects of space debris and to take whatever possible practical steps were needed to solve the problem. One area that the Committee could consider would be new rules governing manned space flights. In that connection, the Committee could use as a basis for its work the draft convention on manned space flights which had been worked out by non-governmental experts from the Russian Federation, the United States of America, Germany and other interested non-governmental organizations.

77. His Government supported the fullest possible expansion of cooperation between States Members of the United Nations in the implementation of programmes and cooperative projects in the area of outer space. Despite his Government's recent decision to re-evaluate the form and scope of its participation in some of those programmes, cooperation with the United Nations would continue to be a high priority of Russian space agencies. In that connection, he expressed his regret that the scope of his Government's participation in the activities planned for the next International Space Year had been reduced. However, his Government had issued a special decree establishing a youth programme in the Russian Federation that would encompass a variety of media events having to do with space and space exploration.

78. In order to redress the legacy of many years of secrecy regarding space activities in the former Soviet Union, the Russian Federation had created its first civilian agency to oversee Government policy on the exploration and use of outer space. The agency would manage procurement of space systems and materials for industrial and military use, coordinate commercial space projects, and work cooperatively with corresponding agencies in the Governments of the other members of the Commonwealth of Independent States on joint space activities and development of Earth-based space facilities. The new agency would also be responsible for formulating the Government's space programme, its draft proposals being subject to independent analysis by experts.

(Mr. Ordzhonikidze,
Russian Federation)

79. The enormous recent changes on the international scene had provided a real basis for further progress in international cooperation in the peaceful use of outer space. To further the goal of peaceful development of outer space, COPUOS should seek ways to coordinate its activities with those of the Conference on Disarmament.

80. Mr. FREUDENSCHUSS (Austria), speaking as Chairman of the Working Group on International Cooperation in the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space of the Special Political Committee, introduced two draft resolutions pertaining to agenda item 72. The Working Group recommended that the Committee should adopt draft resolution A/SPC/47/L.5 on international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space, and draft resolution A/SPC/47/L.6 containing the agreed draft principles relevant to the use of nuclear power sources in outer space. The latter draft resolution was the culmination of more than a decade's work and its adoption would be tangible testimony to the spirit of compromise reigning in COPUOS.

81. The Working Group had also agreed that the Chairman of the Special Political Committee should draw the Fifth Committee's attention to the request in paragraph 29 of the report of COPUOS that the General Assembly should make an adequate allocation for the Programme on Space Applications in order to fully implement the recommendations of UNISPACE 82.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FORTY-SEVENTH SESSION

Official Records

SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE
8th meeting
held on
Friday, 30 October 1992
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 8th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KHOUINI (Tunisia)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.40 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 33: POLICIES OF APARTHEID OF THE GOVERNMENT OF SOUTH AFRICA (continued) (A/SPC/47/L.4 and Add.1-8)

1. The CHAIRMAN said that he took it that the Committee wished to grant the requests for hearings relating to agenda item 33, contained in documents A/SPC/47/L.4 and Add.1-8.

2. It was so decided.

3. The CHAIRMAN said he assumed that the Committee would agree that, should there be any further requests for hearings, they should be made by delegations from the floor at the start of the hearings on 6 November.

4. It was so decided.

AGENDA ITEM 72: INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN THE PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE (continued) (A/47/20 and 383; A/SPC/47/L.5 and L.6)

5. Mr. STRAUSS (Canada) said that it was particularly fitting that, at its current session, the General Assembly would consider for adoption a set of principles relevant to the use of nuclear power sources in outer space, designed to minimize accidental exposure of human beings to radioactive materials used in nuclear power sources in outer space. The principles constituted a significant step towards a legal framework recognizing that outer space should be used in the interests of all countries. Outer space, like the Earth's environment, must be preserved for the benefit and enjoyment of future generations.

6. One of the most important issues in that regard was the problem of space debris. Continuation of current practices might lead to irreversible degradation of the region of space in which human activities took place; such practices also threatened humans on Earth, due to the danger of re-entry of large objects. His delegation noted the recommendation of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee that it should be kept informed of the results of further studies on the problem of the collision of nuclear power sources with space debris.

7. His country, though not a launching State, was an important user of space, and the problem of space debris was of concern to it. Finding a solution posed complex technical and legal problems which could best be dealt with in the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS). The latter's efforts complemented those of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space of the Conference on Disarmament.

8. Canada fully supported the decision of the General Assembly to declare 1992 International Space Year, and had been participating in several projects

(Mr. Strauss, Canada)

and activities in that context. The Canadian Space Agency had developed Geoscope, a computerized database on environmental phenomena for analysing vegetation, pollution, ocean temperatures and atmospheric currents. Canada had also participated in other international initiatives relating to geographic phenomena and had actively promoted the implementation of the recommendations of UNISPACE 82. In May 1992 a Canadian expert had participated in an evaluation mission to Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Mexico in connection with the establishment of a centre for space science and technology education in the region.

9. It was essential to take advantage of the current radically changed political conditions so as to move ahead with cooperation in the exploration and use of outer space, ensuring that such exploration and use was limited to peaceful purposes.

10. Ms. ADAMSON (Australia) said that three themes frequently referred to in the current session of the General Assembly, namely renewed confidence in the United Nations system, the importance of the environment and preventive diplomacy, were relevant in the context of the peaceful uses of outer space. The Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, too, had enjoyed renewed confidence over the past 12 months, while the wide participation of many countries in International Space Year had focused attention on the continuing importance of space.

11. The conclusion, after 13 years, of negotiations on a set of principles relevant to the use of nuclear-power sources in outer space (A/SPC/47/L.6) was a major achievement. The need for more attention to all aspects of the outer space environment, especially those potentially affecting the Earth's environment, was recognized in the Committee's report (A/47/20) and in the omnibus draft resolution (A/SPC/47/L.5). It was appropriate that the new way of thinking about the environment brought about by the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development should be reflected in the Committee's work.

12. In April 1992, the Australian Space Office had sponsored a Radar Remote Sensing Conference that had introduced a new era of Earth observation and management based on remote sensing. Another Australian contribution to International Space Year was its Land Cover Change Project, under which a set of reports demonstrating the use of remotely sensed data for monitoring land cover change were to be published in a variety of forms.

13. In addition to building on its achievements, COPUOS needed to consider new issues such as the collision risk posed by orbital debris, and she urged it to include space debris as an item on the agenda of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee. A first step in dealing with the problem would be to agree on the establishment of good management practices and enhanced information exchange. It was the policy of the Australian Government to remove satellites from the geostationary orbit at the end of their effective operating life, thus avoiding the accumulation of dead satellites in that very

(Ms. Adamson, Australia)

important region of outer space. Her delegation would support moves to have such good management practices recognized in agreements formulated within the COPUOS framework.

14. Mr. ABDERAHMAN (Egypt) said that the international community must try to advance the cause of maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes and promoting international cooperation on the peaceful uses of outer space, taking into account the needs of the developing countries, while also seeking to prevent further militarization of outer space.

15. Although more than two decades had passed since the entry into force of the Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, Including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies, the two main components of the current legal regime - prevention of an arms race in outer space and promotion of the peaceful use of space - had yet to be adequately developed. COPUOS had a special responsibility to develop international space law and should complement the work being done in bilateral and multilateral forums for the prevention of an arms race in outer space and provide substantive input to discussions in the Conference on Disarmament. While it would not be desirable to establish a formal link between the two bodies, to argue that issues raised in one were not relevant to discussions in the other was tantamount to separating interrelated issues.

16. It was essential to elaborate legal principles which would ensure that all countries had access to, and benefited, from, space activities. Accordingly, existing inequalities between technologically advanced space Powers and the developing countries should be addressed. States with advanced space programmes had a special responsibility to help developing countries build indigenous civilian space capabilities. His delegation therefore supported the initiative taken by COPUOS to examine in its Legal Subcommittee the question of how to explore and use outer space for the benefit of all States, particularly developing States. It welcomed the consensus reached on Principles Relevant to the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space (A/47/20, annex), and would support their adoption. It also welcomed the increased interest of COPUOS in the subject of the relationship between the Earth's environment and outer space.

17. Egypt acknowledged the importance of remote sensing to monitor the Earth's environment. Arrangements should be made for more effective dissemination of remote-sensing information, and prices for data and access fees for data reception should be reduced significantly so as to make them affordable for developing countries.

18. With scientific and technological development making the world more and more into an interdependent and small village, peoples of the world were looking to outer space as a source of both hope and danger. His Government believed that COPUOS could play a major role in maximizing the hopes for benefits from outer space and in ensuring the widest possible diffusion of those benefits to all the peoples of the world.

19. Mr. DIMITROV (Bulgaria) said that the agreement reached in COPUOS on the Principles Relevant to the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space constituted a major achievement. Those Principles, together with the principles relating to remote sensing of the Earth from space, would make a vital contribution to the promotion of international cooperation in space. It now remained for the General Assembly to adopt them.

20. He expressed the hope that COPUOS would be equally successful in addressing other outstanding issues requiring urgent consideration and that it would focus on the issue of the use of space science and technology in monitoring and exploring the environment. Special attention should also be given to the issue of protecting the space environment and to the problem of space debris. In his delegation's view, further exchange and dissemination of information concerning national space research would also be very useful.

21. Time had clearly demonstrated the importance of the United Nations Programme on Space Applications in promoting broader cooperation in space science and technology. The Programme should continue to focus on long-term, task-oriented education in space technology, as well as on specific application areas. His delegation hoped that the wide-ranging schedule of meetings, training courses, seminars and conferences to be held in 1993 would promote more comprehensive application of space technologies, in line with the needs of all countries. It supported the proposal to establish regional centres for space science and technology education.

22. His delegation was of the view that the inclusion of the item "Spinoff benefits of space technology: review of current status" in COPUOS' agenda was one means of applying, in practice, the principle that the exploration and use of outer space should be conducted for the benefit of all nations. In that connection it supported the recommendations in paragraphs 143 and 144 of the Committee's report.

23. As a country with limited resources, Bulgaria was interested in international, regional and bilateral cooperation in space activities. It had taken part in the World Space Congress held in Washington D.C., and was participating in INTERCOSMOS programmes, notably the "Apex" and "Svet" projects. It had also participated in other projects in such areas as remote sensing, space biology and medicine, space communications and weather forecasting. Notwithstanding the country's current economic difficulties, it was planning to intensify its cooperation, on both the bilateral and multilateral levels, with partners in the United States, Germany, Italy and France. It was his country's desire to build mutually beneficial cooperation with the European Space Agency as a part of the new international environment.

24. Ms. ARYSTANBEKOVA (Kazakhstan) said that the report of the Committee on the Peaceful Use of Outer Space (A/47/20), presented a complete picture of the many activities it had been carrying out. The approval by consensus of the Principles Relevant to the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space deserved special mention.

(Ms. Arystanbekova, Kazakhstan)

25. The topic under discussion was of particular interest to Kazakhstan. In September 1991, Kazakhstan had established a space research agency whose mission was to advance the Government's space policy by formulating and executing the national space programme, coordinating fundamental and applied space research and executing commercial space projects. The Agency was also responsible for exploiting space applications, introducing them into the Kazakh economy and organizing the training of personnel for the country's space activities.

26. Kazakhstan had recently opened an institute for space research which brought together scientists and specialists in space sciences. The institute had been participating in planning for the mission of the first Kazakh astronaut whose assignments would include experiments in biotechnology, genetic engineering, economics and monitoring of the environment.

27. Since obtaining independence, Kazakhstan had been working hard to broaden international cooperation in the study and use of outer space for peaceful purposes in order to take advantage of the economic, scientific and technical benefits that space activities could bring to its people. In December 1991 Kazakhstan and the other member States of the Commonwealth of Independent States had signed an agreement whereby they had undertaken to carry out space activities in accordance with existing norms of international law and to coordinate their efforts to solve international legal problems in that field. Kazakhstan was also party to an agreement regarding procedures for the maintenance and use of space infrastructure for the space programmes of CIS States. The agreement had established procedures for the functioning and use of space facilities which were the property of the States where the facilities were located. Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation had also signed a special agreement on procedures for the use of the Baikonur Space Centre. Under that agreement, the space research agencies of the two countries would jointly coordinate the planning and implementation of space programmes and the application of space technology in science and industry. Commercial projects at the Space Centre would also be executed jointly between the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation. Baikonur was also to be host to a State centre for new space technology whose mission would be to plan projects and programmes in the areas of space research and engineering.

28. Her Government believed that the development and strengthening of international cooperation for the peaceful exploration and use of outer space was one of the most effective ways to preserve outer space for peaceful purposes. The new realities of the post-confrontational period in world history required a new agenda for an integrated world and created opportunities for the world community to turn to the United Nations for effective cooperation in the service of peace and progress.

29. One of the most important goals of Kazakhstan's foreign policy was to curtail the arms race and prevent it from spreading to outer space. In planning and implementing its space research policy, her Government intended

(Ms. Arystanbekova, Kazakhstan)

to make active use of international experience and to strive for constructive dialogue with all Governments toward that end. Kazakhstan was counting on closer and more productive cooperation on the bilateral level and within the framework of the United Nations to settle political, legal and technical issues relating to the use of outer space.

30. Mr. TRUONG TRIEU DUONG (Viet Nam) said that, while there had been many favourable developments in the peaceful uses of outer space in past years in the fields of telecommunications, monitoring of Earth's environment and air and maritime safety, and numerous efforts had been made to further international cooperation in the peaceful application of space technology, much still remained to be done. He hoped that cooperation with a view to the effective use of outer space for peaceful purposes would be promoted through bilateral, regional and international programmes and that the United Nations would play a more active role in that regard. The Secretariat should redouble its efforts to establish regional centres for space science and technology education in developing countries. His delegation joined others in appealing to the General Assembly to make adequate budgetary allocation for the United Nations Programme on Space Applications in order to enable it to implement fully the recommendations of UNISPACE 82.

31. His delegation was pleased to note the consensus reached by COPUOS on a set of principles relevant to the use of nuclear power sources in outer space. Their adoption would advance international space law and make it possible to turn to other equally important issues such as the definition and delimitation of outer space and the character and utilization of the geostationary orbit. The question of space debris, if not satisfactorily resolved, would hamper international cooperation in space activities. His delegation joined other delegations in calling for the immediate inclusion of that item in the agenda of future COPUOS meetings.

32. All activities relating to outer space must benefit mankind as a whole, with due attention to the needs of developing countries. Outer space must not become a source of conflict or military confrontation. Both the Conference on Disarmament and COPUOS could play important roles in the prevention of an arms race in outer space. Viet Nam accorded high priority to remote sensing activities, and a variety of such programmes were being carried out. The results had been modest but very meaningful for his country's development and Viet Nam looked forward to expanded cooperation in that area, as well as to the establishment of a centre for space science and technology education in the region; he appealed to the international community to provide financial and technical assistance to that end.

33. Mr. JUSUF (Indonesia) said that, in an era of fundamental change on the global scene and developments in space science and technology, COPUOS remained an indispensible forum for achieving results in international cooperation in space. Indonesia was firmly committed to promoting space science and technology and to their applications for economic, social and cultural

(Mr. Jusuf, Indonesia)

development. The United Nations had an especially important role to play in assisting developing countries in the dissemination of information on space-related matters. As a developing country, Indonesia faced the formidable challenge of maintaining sustainable growth and development, while at the same time taking into consideration the natural environment, and it believed that the international community should endeavour to promote cooperation in matters concerning the peaceful uses of outer space on both the international and the regional level.

34. His delegation welcomed the adoption by consensus of the draft Principles Relevant to the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space and noted with satisfaction that the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee had held a special session to mark the International Space Year. The discussion on approaches to international cooperation in space had been very useful. In that regard, he expressed the hope that the United Nations would encourage the continued participation of all countries - particularly the developing countries - in the activities planned for International Space Year and that developed and developing countries alike would take concrete steps to ensure that international cooperation became a reality for the benefit of all countries. He also welcomed the efforts of the United Nations and other relevant international organizations to give priority consideration to the implementation of the recommendations of the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE 82). As a number of the recommendations of UNISPACE 82 had yet to be implemented, his Government supported further study on those issues; at the same time, it was deeply concerned that many of the long-term workshops and programmes had been under-funded. Indonesia had conducted various space-related activities as part of its contribution to UNISPACE 82 and within the framework of International Space Year. In cooperation with the United Nations, his Government was planning a regional conference on space science and technology for sustainable development for States members of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). The Lexique Conference would, inter alia, review the state of the art of space science and technology, progress in space-related activities in support of sustainable development - particularly in the Asia and Pacific region and examine cooperative programmes for developing countries in the region. Indonesia fully supported the idea of establishing a regional centre for space science and technology education and had offered to host such a centre.

35. In the field of remote sensing, Indonesia believed that the United Nations - with the assistance of developed countries and the relevant international bodies - should continue its efforts to promote cooperation to ensure the continuity, compatibility and complementarity of systems for remote sensing. Regularly scheduled meetings should be held between satellite and ground station operators and their users. Moreover, due attention should be paid to the financial problems experienced by developing countries as a result of increasing commercialization of remote sensing. Indonesia had been the applying the tools of remote sensing to study volcanic eruptions,

(Mr. Jusuf, Indonesia)

deforestation and desertification. In addition, an equatorial radar facility would be constructed which would be capable of providing continuous data and information on atmospheric structure and dynamics.

36. He was encouraged to see that concern about the environment was being translated into political will and a commitment to ensure appropriate action. Indonesia remained steadfast in its commitment to strengthening cooperation for the protection and enhancement of the environment, and therefore welcomed the call for further research for the development of improved technology for the monitoring of space debris (General Assembly resolution 46/45, para. 24).

37. Indonesia attached great significance to the issues of defining and delimiting outer space and the use of the geostationary orbit. The latter should be considered a limited natural resource and used rationally and equitably in the interests of all countries, taking into account the special needs of developing countries, particularly those lying on the equator. It was particularly urgent that a sui generis regime be established for the geostationary orbit in order to guarantee and establish the rights of all States in that area.

38. Indonesia believed that there was a need for appropriate regulatory mechanisms to focus space application programmes on the needs and interests of developing countries. The world community should redouble its efforts to fulfil its obligations to mankind as a whole to achieve genuine equality in harnessing the potential of outer space for peaceful uses.

39. Mr. FLOREAN (Romania) was gratified to note the progress which had been made in outer space and related activities, as well as to note that more States and specialist groups had recently become involved in the activities undertaken in the field of new applications of space technology.

40. Romania was currently engaged in the process of fully integrating itself into the international space structures. At the national level, the Romanian Space Agency was entering into new scientific and economic cooperation agreements with other foreign specialized bodies. Romania's goal was to make full use of its experience and human resources and to participate in international programmes in the utilization of outer space for peaceful purposes. Its research facilities and industry were capable of making an increasing contribution to the work being done at the international level.

41. The scientific and educational programmes carried out within the framework of the United Nations Programme on Space Applications played a significant role in furthering the use of outer space for peaceful purposes. His delegation had been impressed by the willingness of Member States and international organizations to cooperate in making a success of International Space Year, and hoped that the interest shown by a large number of countries would lead to a more direct and substantive dialogue and practical results.

(Mr. Florean, Romania)

42. Every step taken to facilitate the broader exchange of views and experience was welcome. The recommendations of UNISPACE 82 were still valid and his delegation hoped that financial obstacles would not prevent Member States from continuing to share the tremendous achievements in space-related activities.

43. The work of COPUOS and its two subsidiary bodies in 1992 had been marked by the completion of the Principles Relevant to the use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space. That was a proof that the Committee had entered into a new era of progress.

44. The Secretary-General's report (A/47/383) showed that an increasing number of United Nations bodies and specialized agencies were also involved in programmes and activities related to the implementation of UNISPACE 82. His delegation welcomed those developments as well as the great contribution made by the regional and international space agencies to the activities undertaken in coordination with the United Nations. The results of their activities should be reported periodically to the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee. His delegation looked forward to discussion in that Subcommittee of the new theme agreed on: "Space-based communication: the expansion of current services and increased understanding of new systems and the services they will make possible" (A/47/20, para. 79).

45. Mr. KALPAGE (Sri Lanka) said that the use of space and space-related technologies for peaceful purposes continued to be a prime concern of the United Nations. It was to the multilateral institutional structure that made up that system that many developing countries looked when seeking information on space technologies that could be of assistance to their development processes.

46. Referring to the Committee's report (A/47/20) he said that the chapters dealing with the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee were of particular interest. The special session referred to in paragraph 82 had included a very impressive symposium on space technologies and the Earth's environment. The Secretariat's report on that symposium was an invaluable document for those who followed developments in outer space and problems of the environment as well as international cooperation in both fields. The utilization of space technology and international environmental protection programmes would be important in the future, for it was to the United Nations that developing countries would turn for information and advice.

47. The agreement reached on principles relevant to the use of nuclear power sources in outer space was a significant addition to the multilateral legal framework in the field of the peaceful uses of outer space. The General Assembly should assure COPUOS and its Legal Subcommittee of its continuing support for their efforts in the further progressive development of international law in that field.

(Mr. Kalpage, Sri Lanka)

48. The activities carried out as part of the United Nations Programme on Space Applications deserved special mention. Although its funding was limited, that Programme had established itself as one of the more substantive technical assistance programmes of the United Nations.

49. His delegation also supported the proposal that a third conference on the exploration and peaceful uses of outer space should be organized in 1995, to be held in a developing country, with a view to consolidating the momentum provided by International Space Year.

Draft resolutions A/SPC/47/L.5 and L.6

50. The CHAIRMAN said he took it that the Committee wished to adopt draft resolutions A/SPC/47/L.5 and A/SPC/47/L.6 without a vote.

51. It was so decided.

52. The CHAIRMAN recalled that at the previous meeting, the representative of Austria had conveyed a request from the Working Group on International Cooperation in the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space that he [the Chairman] should draw the Fifth Committee's attention to the request contained in paragraph 29 of document A/47/20 so that it would be duly taken into account when the Fifth Committee dealt with the matter. He took it that the Committee wished to accede to that request.

53. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FORTY-SEVENTH SESSION

Official Records

SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE
9th meeting
held on
Monday, 2 November 1992
at 3 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 9th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KHOUINI (Tunisia)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 73: UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST (A/47/13, 413, 438, 488, 489, 490, 491, 492, 493, 576, 601)

1. Mr. TÜRKMEN (Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)), introducing his report (A/47/13) covering the period from July 1991 to June 1992 observed that the introductory chapter highlighted the major events which had affected UNRWA and its area of operations in that period, while the rest of the report provided information on its main activities.

2. The fact that peace negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians were still under way a year after they had begun was significant, even though the initial optimism had been tempered by the lack of substantive progress and by the static if not deteriorating economic and social conditions in the occupied territory. An agreement was urgently needed that would remove the cause of the deeply rooted, permanent tension there that inevitably erupted into intermittent violence. The wider geopolitical factors affecting the Middle East gave the entire region a vital stake in the success of the peace process.

3. It should be borne in mind that his report did not cover a new development - the subsequent change of government in Israel - which had created a more positive climate. The new Government's greater willingness to cooperate with UNRWA was an encouraging change of approach. It was obvious to UNRWA, which was involved in the daily life of the Palestinians, that significant steps had to be taken to improve the general atmosphere in the occupied territory if the peace process itself was to be advanced. Several confidence-building measures announced in late August by the new Israeli Government had been welcome, but in order to make a real impact, the Israeli Government should overhaul the legal, military and administrative structures and operational methods of the occupation. Fostering a sound political, economic and social environment in the territory would more effectively allay Israel's legitimate security concerns than would exclusive reliance on military and police measures.

4. The impact of the Gulf War had further depressed a deteriorating economy, because it had caused the return of thousands of formerly well-paid wage earners, who with their extended families had now fallen into poverty; and the loss of external assistance for local Palestinian welfare bodies. The deepening economic crisis, complicated by the most severe winter in living memory and combined with high population growth, was further straining the social fabric of Palestinian society, already beset by poor housing and sanitation. The socio-economic conditions were worst in the Gaza Strip, which had a long-term problem of survival also because of environmental problems of great magnitude caused by water shortage, pollution and lack of adequate sewage disposal.

(Mr. Türkmen)

5. In Lebanon, the misery he had recently seen among the displaced Palestinians was also extremely worrying. The schooling and medical care they received through UNRWA was virtually the only glimmer of hope on their horizon.

6. UNRWA was currently providing educational, health and social services to about 2.7 million Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and the occupied territory, and the magnitude and scope of its activities over the past 43 years was often not realized. The Agency's education programme took the lion's share of the General Fund expenditure, almost 50 per cent, followed by health at 17 per cent, and relief and social services at 11 per cent. In the field of education, the Agency's successful teacher training and vocational training programmes were being revamped to reflect the post-Gulf War situation.

7. A number of new strategies and subprogrammes had also been introduced in its health programme, where funding for hospital care as well as primary health care was a major problem. He was pleased to report that UNRWA had signed an agreement with the European Community for the construction of a general hospital in the Gaza Strip that would not only alleviate a desperate need but create jobs, and provide a foundation for the future health infrastructure. Attention was being focused on environmental health in refugee camps that had been set up 44 years earlier on a temporary basis. Untreated sewage posed a grave health hazard in all camps. In Lebanon, the Agency was seeking donors to finance a sewage plant; in the West Bank, thanks largely to two donors, technical design work was well advanced; and in the Gaza Strip, where the situation was the most serious, UNRWA was in the process of setting up an environmental health planning and development unit.

8. As to its social services, UNRWA had established a two-pronged approach to the alleviation of poverty in the occupied territory: immediate direct relief and longer-term projects dealing with socio-economic advancement, especially of women and other vulnerable groups. The Agency's income-generation programme had been expanded in 1991 to help develop small businesses.

9. With respect to the Agency's financial situation, there had been no substantial decrease in contributions to the General Fund, but the extraordinary measures programme for Lebanon and the occupied territory was about $4 million short, probably because of competing demands from other parts of the world and the unjustified view that the peace process obviated the need for emergency interventions. In the Gaza Strip, for example, whenever there was a strictly imposed curfew, a special food distribution by the Agency was required. In Lebanon, the emergency needs were the result of a long civil war and in their deeply rooted misery the Palestine refugees needed continuing urgent assistance to enable them to surmount the degrading conditions of their lives. UNRWA still required funds for environmental health projects in the Gaza Strip and Lebanon, for housing in the occupied territory and in Lebanon,

(Mr. Türkmen)

and for income generation in the West Bank, Gaza, Jordan, Lebanon and eventually the Syrian Arab Republic. Despite 1991 and 1992 appeals, the majority of those needs were unfunded and hence unimplemented. He sincerely hoped that UNRWA's appeal for emergency assistance would be met with greater generosity. For 1993, the financial picture appeared gloomier: the second year of the Agency's biennial budget and perhaps also the extraordinary measures programme might not be fully funded. Despite its best efforts, the Agency continued to have a narrow donor base, with 95 per cent of its General Fund constituted by 20 major donors, including the European Community.

10. He wished to inform the Committee about the Agency's efforts on behalf of the Palestinians in Kuwait, in particular those with Egyptian travel documents. With the full cooperation and financial assistance of the Government of Kuwait, a team had been sent to Kuwait to survey the situation, and concerned Governments were being approached to find appropriate solutions.

11. Since its operations could not remain aloof from the developments affecting the region, the Agency was giving thought to what its role would be if there was an agreed interim period of self-government in the context of the peace process. There had been informal exchanges of views with the Palestinians in the technical areas in which UNRWA was active, and basically it would do what the self-governing bodies asked it to do and what the donors were willing to fund. In anticipation of successful negotiations, there had already been a greater flow of donor funds into the occupied territory. UNRWA hoped that there would similarly be greater involvement of the United Nations system in an interim period of self-government, with its assistance coordinated to achieve optimal and coherent results.

12. Tribute must be paid to the host Governments in the region, without whose unstinting support the Agency's work would have been impossible and the situation of the refugees untenable. Jordan in particular had had to cope with over 350,000 Palestinians who had arrived from the Gulf in the past two years alone. The host Governments had indeed taken on a disproportionate share of the burden.

13. Since the mandate of UNRWA would expire in June 1993, the current session of the General Assembly would be taking a decision on the matter.

14. Mr. SEIM (Norway), speaking as Rapporteur of the Working Group on the Financing of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, introduced the report of the Working Group (A/47/576), reviewing in particular the assessment, in part IV of the report, of the Agency's current financial situation and its needs for 1993, which had been based on a briefing by the UNRWA Controller, and the Working Group's recommendations found in paragraphs 18 and 19.

15. Mr. ABU ODEH (Jordan) said that Jordan's concern with the question of the Palestine refugees stemmed from the fact that Jordan hosted the greatest number of Palestine refugees and had been the country most strongly affected by the tragedy of the Palestinian people, politically, economically and socially, since 1948. There had been an uninterrupted influx into the country of individuals and families from the occupied Palestinian territory since 1967 owing to various pressures exerted by the occupation authorities and in recent months, in the wake of the Gulf crisis, Jordan had taken in more than 300,000 persons, mostly Palestine refugees. UNRWA had thus found itself faced with increasing responsibilities in meeting the needs of the refugees in Jordan. The fact that the Agency's services had always been inadequate, owing to financial constraints, placed additional burdens on Jordan's infrastructure and finances. Thus, from both the political and humanitarian standpoints, Jordan was in a special position with regard to the question of the Palestine refugees and had a particular interest in UNRWA.

16. The question of the Palestine refugees was basically a political issue that had given rise to a human tragedy, the two aspects, political and humanitarian, being inseparable. UNRWA must therefore continue its work wherever there were Palestine refugees until the achievement of a just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the Middle East conflict, of which the Palestinian question was the core.

17. The level of services, which UNRWA did everything within its means to provide, was adversely affected by a sorely inadequate budget. The failure of the international community to provide sufficient funds, moreover, jeopardized the peace negotiations, for the worsening conditions of the Palestine refugees led to increased despair and extremism. In addition, tyrannical measures taken by the Israeli authorities in the refugee camps in the occupied territory often involved interference with the the Agency's performance of the duties entrusted to it internationally.

18. His delegation, therefore, while thanking UNRWA for its enormous efforts, felt that it was incumbent on the international community to provide greater material and moral support to the Agency, especially in the current difficult period following the Gulf War. It was essential to ensure the safety of the Palestine refugees, safeguard their legal and humanitarian rights and strive to obtain the release of all those unjustly detained; pressure Israel to facilitate the return, as an inalienable right, of all emigrants to their former place of residence in the territories occupied by Israel since 1967; and quickly remedy the deteriorating living conditions in the camps, especially in the West Bank and Gaza, where income-generating projects were needed to stem growing unemployment. A list of required projects should be prepared for proposal to donor States. It was essential also to ensure the speedy return of UNRWA to its headquarters in the region so as to facilitate programme execution and to strengthen the conviction that the mandate of UNRWA would continue until the problem of the Palestine refugees was solved within the framework of a just, peaceful settlement of the Palestinian question based on international legitimacy.

19. Mr. MANSOUR (Observer for Palestine) said that the uprooting, forcible displacement and dispossession of his people by Zionist settler colonialism was one of the greatest tragedies of contemporary history. As a result of both State and individual Israeli terrorism, the number of Palestinian refugees in the occupied territory, the neighbouring Arab States and other countries had reached 2.65 million.

20. As the intifadah of the Palestinian people, which was determined to end Israeli occupation, approached its fifth year, the report of the Commissioner-General (A/47/13) and other reports of international organizations described the brutality of Israel against the Palestinian people in the occupied territory. According to the Commissioner-General's report, the total number of Palestinian casualties since the beginning of the intifadah had reached 1,111 killed and 75,500 injured, including a significant proportion of children and women. Approximately 12,700 residents of the occupied territories were in detention, about 8,500 of them held in a prison or detention centre situated outside the occupied territory, in violation of the fourth Geneva Convention. The actual figures were much higher because the Agency relied solely on information from hospitals and UNRWA clinics. UNRWA had protested those crimes and other illegal Israeli measures such as curfews, punitive demolition and sealing of houses and shelters, expropriation of land and uprooting of thousands of trees, as violations of international humanitarian law.

21. He cited references in the report to the Israeli use of undercover units, high taxation rates and increasingly aggressive behaviour of Israeli settlers towards the Palestinian population and sometimes towards UNRWA staff and premises. That hostility posed a threat to the safety of the Agency's staff, who were also frequently harassed by Israeli security forces.

22. Further problems had arisen from the loss of remittances from Palestinians previously working in the Gulf States and the arrival in Jordan of more than 300,000 Palestinians from Kuwait.

23. The situation in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip remained critical, since no significant relaxation of the traditional pattern of Israeli occupation policies had occurred. Contrary to expectation, the situation in the occupied territory during the initial months of the new Israel Government was even worse, as evidenced by the intensification of the settlement policy in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem and the increase in Israeli brutality during the hunger strike of the Palestinian prisoners in September 1992.

24. As early as 1948, in its resolution 194 (III), the United Nations had called for refugees wishing to return home to be allowed to do so as early as possible. Israel had consistently refused to implement that and other relevant United Nations resolutions. That Israeli intransigence had forced the General Assembly to establish UNRWA in 1949 and subsequently to renew its mandate. Furthermore, Israel had sought the destruction of refugee camps and the forced integration of the refugees into Arab countries. The demolition of

(Mr. Mansour, Observer, Palestine)

refugee shelters in occupied Palestine and Lebanon was testimony to that Israeli policy. Again, massive Jewish immigration from the former Soviet Union and elsewhere had increased Israeli desire to expel the Palestinian people from their own country. Israel was attempting to negate the existence of the Palestinian people and their inalienable national rights, including the right of refugees and displaced persons to return to their homes and property; the right to exercise self-determination; and the right to independence and statehood under the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

25. In the hope that a better world based on justice and fairness could be emerging, the PLO had welcomed the convening of the peace conference in Madrid and had authorized Palestinian participation in it. The question of Palestine refugees was a key component of a just solution to the Palestine question. The international community was not divided as to how that question should be resolved, as witness the annual introduction of resolution A in the Special Political Committee by the United States and the fact that not one State, including Israel, voted against it.

26. With negotiations under way, there was no excuse for not implementing the United Nations resolutions. The international community was obliged to uphold international legality and to implement its collective achievements. A double standard in implementing United Nations resolutions should not be allowed. The international community had not been wrong to adopt them. Israel had been wrong all along, and it was high time that Israel corrected itself and joined the peace process. Israel, however, had boycotted the multilateral seminar on refugees held in Ottawa, Canada, in May 1992. Another round of that seminar was due to be convened in Ottawa; he wondered whether Israel would attend. Any efforts the seminar could make to resolve the question of Palestine refugees and displaced persons would be welcomed by the Palestinian people and their leadership, but the appropriate place to address that issue was in bilateral negotiations between the PLO and the Israelis.

27. The United Nations had been involved in the Palestine question ever since its creation: Palestine supported the Secretary-General's insistence on full United Nations participation in the current peace process and looked forward to greater involvement of the United Nations and particularly UNRWA. His organization fully supported UNRWA and would continue to cooperate with it until a just political solution was found to the Palestinian refugee problem. In that connection, the PLO strongly supported the extension of the Agency's mandate for three more years.

28. Mr. CLIFF (United Kingdom), speaking on behalf of the European Community and its member States, said that their delegations would support the renewal of the mandate of UNRWA for a further three years.

29. From the moment of its creation in 1949, UNRWA had had to adapt to changing political and economic circumstances. Despite everything, it had

(Mr. Cliff, United Kingdom)

continued to provide shelter, food, education and medical care for Palestine refugees. Through the Agency, the United Nations had played a vital role in the region, bringing a minimum of stability to the shaken lives and communities of the Palestinians.

30. However, aid was no substitute for a political solution. The Community was firmly committed to a constructive role in the current peace process and hoped it would lead to a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement so that the work of UNRWA would no longer be needed. For the moment, it welcomed the more positive approach to the peace process taken by the present Israeli Government and the involvement of the United Nations as a full participant in the multilateral negotiations, and looked forward to UNRWA playing its part.

31. Despite some encouraging political progress, the economic and humanitarian situation in the Agency's field of operations remained of serious concern. The Community deplored the use of violence by all parties in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem. The Israeli authorities, who, under the fourth Geneva Convention, were responsible for the situation in the occupied territories, had continued to apply repressive measures, often out of proportion to the Palestinian demonstrations and attacks. Many Palestinian victims had required emergency treatment in UNRWA clinics and its own staff had also been affected: since 1987, nine staff members had been killed and many injured. The disregard of the Israeli authorities for UNRWA privileges and immunities was a matter of grave concern. He urged Israel to abide by its obligations under the fourth Geneva Convention and appealed to all parties to respect the rights and duties of UNRWA staff, which derived from the Charter.

32. Although all universities in the occupied territories had reopened, educational programmes had continued to be disrupted by curfews, strikes and Israeli restrictions. The Community was concerned about the detrimental effect the situation was having on students' performance, and called upon Israel to ensure that all educational establishments would remain open throughout the academic year.

33. The European Community's contribution to UNRWA in 1992 had been approximately 45 million European Currency Units (ECU) or $55 million for educational, health and food programmes. Member States' individual contributions had been about $48 million. The Community and its member States had also made substantial contributions to emergency appeals, and the Community had pledged ECU 12 million, or about $17 million, at the 1992 pledging conference towards a planned UNRWA hospital in Gaza. The Community and its member States were the largest donor to the Agency's regular budget and a substantial donor to emergency and other programmes. They remained concerned about the continued inadequacy of financial resources for all UNRWA activities, and commended the Commissioner-General's efforts to raise funds. Countries that had made generous contributions in the past should continue to do so, and countries that had contributed little or nothing, particularly the wealthier States in the region, should give generously.

34. Mr. AKŞIN (Turkey) said that his delegation considered the Peace Conference on the Middle East to be a historic opportunity to reach a just and lasting solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict and a courageous step in the right direction. Unfortunately, the optimism and hope generated by the peace process had not brought any improvement in the daily lives of Palestinians in the occupied territories. The Israeli authorities had continued their policies of repression, including collective punishment and punitive demolition and sealing of homes and shelters. Israeli practices in violation of the 1949 Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War continued. His delegation fully supported UNRWA appeals to the Israeli Government for confidence-building measures to help ease tensions in the occupied territories.

35. UNRWA had an impressive record in providing education, relief and medical care to 2.5 million displaced Palestinians despite very difficult circumstances. His delegation was concerned with the loss of income and remittances after the return of thousands of migrant workers following the Gulf crisis, which had seriously affected the economic conditions of the Palestinian people and created new challenges for UNRWA. In that context, the Agency's expanded programme of assistance launched in 1988 to improve living conditions in refugee camps was especially important. The revolving fund set up in 1991 to compensate for Palestinians' loss of income deserved the full support of the international community.

36. His delegation was disturbed to learn of the difficulties faced by UNRWA staff in the occupied territories. The Israeli authorities' disregard of the privileges and immunities of UNRWA and its assertion of control over Agency operations were unacceptable.

37. The help provided by UNRWA to Palestinians could not be an alternative to a just political solution of the Palestine question. Although enormous difficulties lay in the way of a peace settlement, his delegation hoped that negotiations would lead, as a first stage, to an interim self-government in the West Bank and Gaza. UNRWA might provide valuable services at that stage, and could in any case make a valuable contribution to the work of the Working Group on Refugees to be held in Ottawa from 11 to 12 November 1992.

38. Although pleased to note that UNRWA had received sufficient funding for its core programme in 1991 and expected to do so again in 1992, his delegation shared the Commissioner-General's view that the Agency's regular budget needed to be increased by 5 per cent to meet the growing needs of 2.7 million people. Governments that had not yet contributed to UNRWA should make an effort to do so and contributing Governments should strive to increase their share. His own Government, in recognition of the valuable services rendered by UNRWA, had increased its contribution from $40,000 to $100,000.

39. Ms. RAVN (Norway), speaking on behalf of the five Nordic countries, thanked the Commissioner-General for his comprehensive and illuminating report. Nowhere in the world were there such high numbers of long-term refugees as in the Middle East. As a result of the Gulf conflict, the demands on UNRWA had increased even more, primarily because of the influx of Palestinians from the Gulf area, and the socio-economic deterioration in the occupied territories and Jordan had been aggravated by the loss of remittances from Palestinians in the Gulf area. Although the Agency had continued to cope impressively with those challenges, it was necessary to emphasize that the appalling social and economic conditions in the Gaza Strip gave rise to particular concern.

40. Only a just, lasting and comprehensive settlement of the Israeli-Arab conflict and the Palestinian question could fundamentally improve the situation of the refugees. Over the past year, the unprecedented opportunities offered by the peace process in the Middle East had been given renewed impetus by the positive signals from the new Israeli Government. The Nordic countries appealed to all parties to show flexibility and far-sightedness and to refrain from any act that might constitute an obstacle to the peace process.

41. One of the problems that must be addressed by the peace negotiations was the plight of refugees caused by the Israeli-Arab conflict. The Multilateral Working Group on Refugees had thus been established as part of the ongoing peace process. As the multilateral and bilateral talks were mutually reinforcing, the former might contribute to creating an atmosphere conducive to a settlement of the longstanding bilateral issues between Israel and the Palestinians. The Working Group on Refugees had held its first meeting in May 1992, and a new meeting was scheduled in November. Norway had expressed its readiness to host a meeting of the Working Group in Oslo in 1993. It welcomed the fact that the United Nations was now a full extraregional participant in the multilateral negotiations and foresaw an important role for UNRWA in the Working Group.

42. As was pointed out in the Commissioner-General's report, the situation in the occupied territories stood in sharp contrast to the optimism created by the opening of the peace talks. Although the number of people killed and injured in the intifadah-related incidents had again decreased, it remained high, as did the number of Palestinians killed in intra-Palestinian confrontations. Those figures were distressing reminders of the deep roots of the Palestinian question.

43. The Nordic countries continued to be preoccupied by Israeli measures such as administrative detention and the sealing and demolition of houses in the West Bank and Gaza. They urged Israel to comply fully with the provisions of the fourth Geneva Convention and to cease its settlement policies in the occupied territories and welcomed the measures taken so far in the latter connection by the Israeli Government. They were also deeply concerned for the safety of UNRWA staff and the integrity of its premises. Although glad that

(Ms. Ravn, Norway)

no deportations had been carried out in the period covered by the report, they continued to be opposed to the policy of deportations.

44. Throughout the period, UNRWA had continued its activity in the three key areas of education, health and relief and social services. The Nordic countries were encouraged by the cost-effective way in which education was carried out in UNRWA schools in spite of difficult circumstances but shared the concern expressed in the report at the continued closures of schools in the occupied territories. They were, on the other hand, happy to note that the universities were now open and trusted that they would remain so.

45. UNRWA was to be commended for its efforts to upgrade emergency medical care in the West Bank and Gaza and to improve the very low standards of water supply, waste disposal and general sanitation in the camps. Low hospital and health centre capacity, particularly within the area of primary care, remained, however, a matter of concern.

46. UNRWA's efforts to assist the most needy families by assuring basic standards of nutrition, shelter and clothing were of fundamental importance. It must not be forgotten that it was essential to raise the socio-economic level of the refugee population as a whole. The Nordic Governments therefore welcomed the Agency's increasing engagement in income-generating programmes. They also welcomed the involvement of other United Nations agencies, which constituted a valuable complement to the work of UNRWA. Continued and expanded inter-agency cooperation and coordination were needed to ensure optimal use of resources.

47. If the present level of services was to be maintained, an adequate resource base for the Agency must be ensured. The Nordic Governments had noted in particular the concern expressed by the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA regarding the difficulties experienced in maintaining the emergency-related programmes. They supported the view that a broadening of the Agency's donor base should continue to constitute a major priority. Particular efforts should continue to be directed towards the wealthier countries of the region in order to increase the level of their contributions.

48. The Nordic countries continued their firm support of the Agency's important activities. In 1992, their contributions had amounted to almost one fourth of the total from individual countries to its General Fund and ongoing activities; they had also supported its emergency and special operations.

49. Experience had demonstrated the importance of the Agency's activities and the international community must not fail to provide it with the necessary support at the present encouraging juncture in the history of the Middle East.

50. Mr. THAN TAI HING (Malaysia) said that the report of the Commissioner-General again reflected the deplorable conditions the Palestine refugees had to endure and UNRWA's steadfast efforts to alleviate their sufferings. His delegation appreciated the dedication and skill of the Agency's international staff and fully supported the Secretary-General's pledge to "continue to do his utmost to ensure the safety of all the United Nations staff". It was, indeed, the collective responsibility of the United Nations to ensure the security of UNRWA staff. His delegation again called on Israel to desist from acts of aggression against the Palestinian people and to release all arbitrarily detained Palestine refugees as well as the employees of UNRWA who were attempting to carry out the mandate of the United Nations. It shared the Commissioner-General's concern with regard to the Agency's funding prospects. His country would maintain its modest but regular contribution to UNRWA and again supported the recommendations of the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA urging Member States that had not contributed to UNRWA to do so and those Member States which could do so to increase their contributions. It also welcomed the change made in the Agency's biennial budgetary cycle for 1992-1993, which had improved the efficiency of the use of its resources, as well as the involvement, for the first time, of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions in the Agency's budgetary process.

51. Malaysia commended the excellent work of the Agency in the field of relief and direct social service and in promoting self-reliance through developmental programmes. The development programmes for refugees with special needs, particularly women and disabled persons, were of particular interest. In that regard, the Agency was to be congratulated for the launching of a Palestinian Women's Initiative Fund. The increase in drug abuses among the youth in the occupied territories was, however, a cause for concern. His delegation called on the youth of the Palestinian people to fight the drug menace and urged the staff of UNRWA and other social workers to develop remedial measures to address the problem on an urgent basis.

52. Malaysia condemned the continued Israeli interference with the Agency's operations and noted with concern that there had been no progress on the claim by UNRWA against the Government of Israel regarding damage to its property and facilities resulting from Israeli military actions. The occupying Power must be reminded that it was directly responsible and liable under international law for the damages and losses incurred by the Agency and urged to pay the outstanding arrears it owed to the Agency.

53. His delegation deplored the policy and practices of Israel which had prolonged the closure of educational and vocational institutions which were largely operated by the Agency. Illegal military closures of schools in the occupied territories were on the rise and the number of injuries, fatalities and detentions among young students and trainees at the Agency's educational institutions had reached an alarming state. Those inhumane actions deserved the strongest condemnation by the international community. Malaysia once again called upon Israel to fulfil its obligations in accordance with the

(Mr. Than Tai Hing, Malaysia)

provisions of the fourth Geneva Convention (1949), to reopen all educational and vocational institutions and to release unconditionally all students currently under detention.

54. It was a matter of serious concern to his delegation that the repatriation or compensation of the refugees had not been accomplished and that no substantial progress had been made in the programme for the reintegration of refugees either by repatriation or resettlement. It condemned the continuing Israeli policy of denying the right of return of all refugees and reaffirmed its support of the inalienable right of all displaced Palestinian inhabitants to return to their homes or former places of residence in the territories occupied by Israel since 1967. Despite the repeated calls by the international community for Israel to desist from its practices, it continued and had indeed increased its policies and practices of repression, dispossession, detention and killings.

55. Since the beginning of the intifadah more than 1,000 Palestinians had been killed by the Israeli security forces and many more young people were languishing in detention camps and prisons. His delegation sympathized with the Palestinian inmates who had recently launched a hunger strike in protest against the deplorable conditions in the prisons and was concerned that the situation in the occupied territories had recently deteriorated. It urged the General Assembly and the Security Council to give immediate consideration to sending observer missions to the occupied territories affected in order to prevent Israeli brutality against the innocent Palestinian people. Given the deep sense of vulnerability of the Palestinians in the occupied territories, Malaysia urged the Security Council to implement resolution 681 (1990) in earnest in order to ensure the safety and protection of Palestinian rights in the occupied territories. In that connection, it looked forward to the report of the Secretary-General requested under that resolution.

56. Mr. SINHASENI (Thailand) expressed his delegation's appreciation of the Commissioner-General's comprehensive report on the work of UNRWA, which had functioned effectively since its inception in spite of the Agency's serious financial constraints and the constant danger in which its staff lived. Education continued to be one of the most important services the Agency provided and it should be allowed to continue to do so without interruption. Its record in the area of health care was also commendable, particularly in view of the fact that the demand on its medical services continued to increase at a rate greater than the resources allotted to the programme. His delegation also noted with satisfaction the Agency's close cooperation with other agencies of the United Nations system, in particular, the World Health Organization, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the United Nations Children's Fund. Although it was encouraging to note that the Agency's financial condition for 1991 had been relatively healthy, strenuous efforts should be made to raise additional funds to enable it to cope with the increased demand and to improve its flexibility in responding to emergency situations. Thailand had made regular contributions to UNRWA and would maintain its level of support for the Agency.

(Mr. Sinhaseni, Thailand)

57. The historic meeting in Madrid in October 1991 and the ongoing discussions in Washington had given cause for optimism that a settlement of the Palestine question as well as the broader Middle East conflict was finally within reach. Until a just and comprehensive peace in that region was found, however, the services provided by UNRWA remained indispensable to the livelihood and well-being of the Palestine refugees.

58. Mr. ANSAY (Organization of the Islamic Conference) said that the continued existence of UNRWA, 42 years after its inception, was indicative of the failure of the international community to bring about a just and lasting solution to the Palestine question. Since that question and the problem of Jerusalem were its raison d'être, the Organization of the Islamic Conference held that a lasting and equitable solution should involve the withdrawal of Israel from all Arab territories it had occupied since 1967, including Holy Jerusalem, the recognition of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their rights to return to their homeland, to self-determination and to establish their independent State with Jerusalem as its capital, and the recognition of the right of all States in the region to live within secure and internationally recognized boundaries. In that context, it welcomed the holding of an international peace conference in Madrid and fully supported the ongoing peace talks in Washington.

59. The well-established UNRWA educational, health and social welfare programmes were such as were normally provided by Governments. UNRWA had been created solely for Palestine refugees because of the historical context of the Palestine problem. UNRWA was therefore a symbol of the international commitment to the Palestinian people and the belief that they should benefit from the international community's assistance until the problem was resolved. The Agency had shared in the convulsions of the region in which it operated, from the war of 1948 to the Gulf crisis; continual increases in its operations had been required with correspondingly greater demands on its limited resources. Until the day arrived when its services were no longer required, the international community should see to it that the Agency was supplied with the resources and moral support it must have if it was to carry out the will of the General Assembly. Its vital humanitarian assistance must continue whatever the outcome of the current peace negotiations, and it would continue to need assistance and support from Member States, in particular from current and prospective donor countries.

60. The Organization of the Islamic Conference still considered UNRWA the most fitting humanitarian body to assist the Palestinian people during the current period of transition and supported the renewal of its mandate for a further three years.

The meeting rose at 5.30 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FORTY-SEVENTH SESSION

Official Records

SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE
10th meeting
held on
Tuesday, 3 November 1992
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 10th MEETING

Chairman:	Mr. FUENTES IBAÑEZ (Vice-Chairman)	(Bolivia)
later:	Mr. KHOUINI (Chairman)	(Tunisia)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 73: UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST (continued) (A/47/13, 576, 413, 438, 488, 489, 490, 491, 492, 493 and 601)

1. In the absence of Mr. Khouini (Tunisia), Mr. Fuentes Ibáñez (Bolivia), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

2. Mr. AL-KHATER (Qatar) said that the report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) (A/47/13) described accurately the difficult circumstances and financial problems faced by the Agency as it carried out its humanitarian work.

3. During the period covered by the report many incidents had occurred in the occupied territories, with the Israeli security forces effecting incursions into UNRWA installations and threatening and assaulting members of its staff, as well as causing material damage; they had also entered clinics and hospitals, detained and searched ambulances and beaten medical personnel, in some cases confiscating their identity cards. UNRWA had protested against such acts, regarding them as a violation of its privileges and immunities, but the Israeli authorities had cited considerations of military security, in some cases without justification.

4. Such practices violated the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and gave the lie to Israel's assertion that it was the most vigorous democracy in the Middle East. In the name of what democracy was Israel hampering the Agency's work?

5. Despite the expectations aroused by the peace process, the Palestine refugees in the occupied territories still needed the Agency's services. His delegation therefore appealed to all delegations to make contributions to the UNRWA budget, urged Israel to cease hampering its work, and expressed the hope that its mandate would be extended for a further three years.

6. Mr. POSSO SERRANO (Ecuador) said that the distressing situation of thousands of Palestine refugees in the Middle East persisted, a situation which depended largely on the relations between UNRWA and the Government of the occupying Power and the authorities of Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.

7. A vicious circle of Israeli repression and Palestinian protests and uprisings had been created in the occupied territories, and the refugees remained extremely vulnerable, even to external developments such as the Gulf war.

8. The root of the problem was that the Palestine refugees in the Middle East had become refugees for life, even though UNRWA had been established in 1949 to provide temporary relief and assistance.

(Mr. Posso Serrano, Ecuador)

9. The peace conferences involving Israel and several Arab countries, which Ecuador welcomed and supported morally, gave grounds for hope. However, until an overall solution was found the Palestinian people would remain refugees. It was therefore important to extend the Agency's mandate for three years, entailing an obligation on the part of the international community to continue providing funds to enable UNRWA to perform its important humanitarian functions. Nevertheless, since some States had greater responsibility than others in the peace process, they had greater obligations with regard to the funding of UNRWA.

10. Mr. ABDERAHMAN (Egypt) said that the Commissioner-General's report was being considered at a historic moment. The peace process had begun about a year ago. The first series of multilateral negotiations had examined means of strengthening the cooperation among the countries of the region and solving basic common problems, including the problem of the Palestine refugees. The United Nations had been officially invited to participate in the second series of multilateral negotiations. The Organization had already taken part in the working groups on economic cooperation and the environment and would take part during the coming week in the working group on the Palestine refugees.

11. Although UNRWA had been established on a temporary basis, several resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council, approved down the years, had assigned important functions to UNRWA with respect to the solution of the problem of the Palestine refugees in the Middle East. At present UNRWA was an important source of information and a means of rendering essential assistance to the Palestine refugees until a peaceful solution to the problem was found.

12. Despite the expectations aroused by the peace process, the situation in the occupied territories remained extremely serious. The Commissioner-General's report mentioned some of the measures taken by the Israeli forces of occupation, including the holding of Palestinian prisoners in jails or detention centres outside the occupied territories, the use of a large part of the occupied territories for military or civilian purposes, the restriction of the water supply and the introduction of a pass system which limited the freedom of movement of Palestinian males. Those measures ran counter to the international instruments which established the rights and duties of occupying Powers.

13. The new Government of Israel had stated its desire to achieve peace. Egypt urged it to put an end to the acts of repression described in the Commissioner-General's report, remove the restrictions on the Palestine refugees, and cease hampering the work of UNRWA. If Israel pursued a genuine change of policy, the Commissioner-General's report would describe that change.

14. His delegation had followed closely the Agency's efforts to reform its administrative and financial structure and improve the efficiency of its programmes, especially with respect to emergency situations. Egypt shared the concern expressed by the Commissioner-General that, as a result of the

(Mr. Abderahman, Egypt)

participation of the United Nations in costly humanitarian missions in many different parts of the world, from 1993 the resources allocated to UNRWA would decline. Even the UNRWA regular budget for 1992 had not been fully funded. Furthermore, as the number of Palestinians in the occupied territories had been increasing, UNRWA would not be able to maintain the present level of programme implementation unless larger contributions were made to its budget. That was an issue which should be taken up by the working group on the financing of UNRWA.

15. Egypt hoped that the day would come when the Agency's work was no longer needed and the Palestinian people could exercise its right to self-determination. Until that goal was achieved the Agency would continue to perform a necessary function.

16. Mr. Khouini (Tunisia) took the Chair.

17. Mr. MARTINO (Observer for the Holy See) said that the Holy See was deeply concerned about the people who lived in the Holy Land, a land that had a unique sacred character for Jews, Christians and Muslims and formed an integral part of their religious patrimony. In his address of 11 January 1992 to the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See, Pope John Paul II had made special reference to the Peace Conference on the Middle East that had begun in Madrid where, for the first time, Arabs and Israelis had sat down at the same table and had agreed to speak on subjects that until then had been prohibited. Those Palestinian-Israeli negotiations and other similar bilateral peace negotiations between Israel and, respectively, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria had helped to create the context in which the Holy See and Israel had agreed to study and define issues of reciprocal interest at the meeting held at the Vatican on 29 July 1992.

18. However, along with those positive signs that were slowly taking shape, there were also strong indications that the daily life of many inhabitants of the region continued to be one of suffering, uncertainty and even despair. Many humanitarian agencies of the Catholic Church, in cooperation with UNRWA, were struggling to deal with the needs of refugees in the region. The number of those in need was increasing daily. International agencies such as Misereor, Missio, Kinderhilfen Bethlehem, Caritas Internationalis and others were working in conjunction with the Pontifical Mission for Palestine, providing resources for shelter, education, food, medical care and employment for those in need, regardless of creed or ethnic origin.

19. The return of Palestinians to the region after the Gulf war, at a time of economic uncertainty, had added to the Palestinians' problems of unemployment. The reports of UNRWA about the people that it served dovetailed with any detailed report that Catholic agencies could provide, since they all served the same purpose. The list of needs was long and, to those serving in the field, seemed endless when compared to the meagre resources available. Palestinians in the occupied territories, or Palestinian refugees in other countries of the region, were seeking answers to questions posed by

(Mr. Martino, Observer, Holy See)

settlements established in the occupied territories. Existing difficulties were exacerbated by the presence in the area of armies and armaments of terrifying dimensions, as well as the phenomenon of extremism, which capitalized on the suffering caused by instability, injustice and economic need in order to seize political control.

20. The Holy See was keenly aware that the peace process must take account of the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian and Israeli peoples to a homeland where they could live in security and peace. A just, complete and lasting solution was urgently needed to give each what it rightly demanded and to a put an end to the dramatic situation that had lasted too long and which the community of nations had not faced with all due seriousness.

21. The same peace process must also pay close attention to the unique religious significance that the Holy Land had for Jews, Christians and Muslims, and to the special character of the City of Jerusalem. The problem must be resolved in such a way that no one was ever tempted to take up arms to conquer the Old City. The Holy See considered the problem of Jerusalem more from a viewpoint of values than territory. It asked that, regardless of how the problem of sovereignty was resolved and who would be called to exercise it, the Holy City should be given a special status with international guarantees, endowing it with adequate means for ensuring the preservation of its special characteristics, its Holy Places, the freedom to visit them, its religious and ethnic communities and their essential liberties, and also its city plan.

22. A joint statement issued on 14 January 1992 by all the Christian leaders in the Holy Land contained a detailed list of serious incidents that had recently occurred in the Holy City, and categorically condemned all attempts at modifying the unique demographic character and status of Jerusalem.

23. The international community should continue to support the activities of UNRWA and other agencies and non-governmental organizations on behalf of the Palestine refugees in the Middle East, and should work for the day when all such activities were unnecessary. On that day, the Holy Land and, in particular, Jerusalem would be the symbol of peace for all mankind.

24. Mr. ABOUL-NASR (Observer for the League of Arab States) said that the historic meeting held in Madrid in October 1991 had given rise to the hope that that and other meetings and talks between Arab and Israeli representatives would contribute to the settlement of the conflict in the Middle East. Optimism had increased following the election of a new Israeli Government, which had raised expectations of progress in the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). Regrettably, those hopes had not materialized, and the sufferings of the Palestinians continued.

25. The reports of the Commissioner-General confirmed the constant deterioration of the situation of refugees and displaced persons, which was aggravated by the illegal practices and violations perpetrated by the Israeli

(Mr. Aboul-Nasr, Observer, League of Arab States)

authorities. In particular, the report covering the period between 1 July 1991 and 30 June 1992 (A/47/13) reflected a situation that had existed for years, with tragic circumstances for the occupied territories, since Israel continued to apply illegal and arbitrary measures, including curfews, the sealing of dwellings, the expropriation of land, as well as a policy of settling colonists in the occupied territories in order to alter the demographic structure of those territories.

26. Since its adoption of resolution 194 (III), the General Assembly had, every year, adopted resolutions in which it reaffirmed the right of refugees to return to their homes, and the need to respect the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, and requested Israel to implement those resolutions. Since Israel continued to defy the United Nations, the Organization should take measures to implement its resolutions on the Middle East with the same seriousness and interest that it showed in other areas and, if it wished to maintain its credibility, should impose sanctions against States that did not respect those resolutions.

27. UNRWA was facing difficulties that were clearly described in the report; those difficulties were due both to the harassment of UNRWA employees by the Israeli authorities and to the levelling of their buildings. Nevertheless, UNRWA had continued to provide its humanitarian services to refugees. The League of Arab States valued that work and wished the Agency success, and it supported the proposal to extend the Agency's mandate for another three years and suggested that its headquarters should be relocated to Beirut.

28. In spite of the efforts of the Commissioner-General, the financial situation of UNRWA continued to be precarious. The United Nations had the responsibility of guaranteeing the continuity of UNRWA activities. To that end, he called upon Governments to contribute generously during the next period and thereby assist the peace process.

29. In spite of Israel's repressive practices, the will of the Palestinian people would not be broken but, on the contrary, would become stronger in order to defend its inalienable rights. The League of Arab States hoped that the current talks, as part of the peace process, would result in a broad and just settlement of the question of Palestine and the Arab-Israeli conflict on the basis of United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

The meeting rose at 11.25 a.m.